LECTURES

ON

HISTORY,

DELIVERED IN

THE NORMAL SCHOOL

OF

PARIS,

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

London,

Printed at the Oriental Preſs, by WILSON & Co. *Wild Court,*

FOR J. RIDGWAY,

YORK STREET, ST. JAMES'S SQUARE.

1800.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE LECTURES on HISTORY, I now present to the Public, are the same which obtained its suffrage when delivered in the NORMAL SCHOOL in the third year of the Republic. I should have wished to have rendered them more worthy of approbation, by further corrections, and by treating the different subjects more at large; but I found that, in clothing them in a new dress, any original merit that might belong to my first work, as a rapid and *extempore* composition*, would be com-

* The Reader ought to be informed, that the Pro-

completely destroyed. Besides, in our circumstances, the consideration of literary glory ought to be inferior to that of social utility; and with respect to the present subject, that utility is greater than it may perhaps at first sight appear. The more I have analysed the influence which History constantly exercises on the actions and opinions of men, the more am I convinced that it is one of the most fertile sources of their prejudices and errors.

From History the greater part of religious

fessors of the Normal School lectured from some brief notes only, in the manner of Speakers in public assemblies. Their words were taken down by shorthand writers, and, being slightly revised, were immediately sent to the press. This was the case with my three first Lectures, and I had only fifteen days allowed me to prepare for the whole Course.

ligious opinions are derived; and granting to the pride of each sect the exception of its own tenets from error, still, among contradictory beliefs, one only can be right. It is evident, however, that whenever a belief is proved to be false, all the variety of actions and opinions of which it is the basis are deprived of their support, and fall to the ground with the original error. From History are likewise derived almost all the political maxims and principles which guide, overthrow, or consolidate governments. The sphere of civil acts and opinions which this second influencing power embraces in a nation, is sufficiently obvious, and need not be pointed out here. Finally, the reports which we every day hear, and which form a real branch of History, become the cause, more or less mediate,

of a number of false ideas and erroneous actions. Indeed, were the errors of mankind submitted to calculation, I should venture to predict, that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of them would be found to belong to History; and I think I should then establish this maxim—*that the prejudices and false ideas which each individual man possesses come to him from others*, in consequence of the credulous confidence he places in reports; while all the truths and correct ideas he has acquired belong properly to himself, and are the fruits of his own personal experience.

I believe, therefore, that I should render an eminent service to my country, if this book should shake that *respect for History* which has become a

dogma

dogma in European education—if, becoming the *Universal Preface* of every History, it should put the reader on his guard against the empiricism of authors and the illusions of his own mind—if it should induce all *thinking* men to submit every *narrator* to a severe examination, with respect to his means of information, and the first source of his reports—if it should accustom the reader to render an account to himself of the motives of his belief, and to inquire—

1. Whether, since we testify an habitual indifference in verifying facts, and when we undertake that task find ourselves opposed by so many difficulties, it is reasonable to require more diligence and more success from others than from ourselves?

2. Whether, since we form false and

imperfect notions with respect to what passes under our own eyes, we can expect to be better informed of what passes, or has passed, at great distances of time or place?

3. Whether, since we have more than one present example of equivocal or false facts being transmitted to posterity with all the passports of truth, we have reason to suppose that men in former times were less daring, or more conscientious in their transactions?

4. Whether, since in the midst of factions the historian is menaced by every party his writings offend, posterity, or the present age, can expect that he should make sacrifices which would be rewarded only by accusations of imprudence, or the barren honour of a funeral pomp?

5. Whether, since it would be imprudent,

prudent, and almost impossible for any General to write his campaigns, any Minister his negociations, or any public man his memoirs, in the face of actors and witnesses who might contradict him or ruin his reputation, posterity can expect, when those witnesses or actors are dead, and can no longer dispute the statement, that self love, animosity, shame, distance of time, and defects of memory, should have permitted the real truth to be handed down with fidelity?

6. Whether the pretended information and impartiality attributed to posterity, be not the deceitful consolation of innocence, or the flattery of seduction or fear?

7. Whether it be not true that posterity frequently collects and consecrates the depositions of the successful com-

competitor, which silence the proofs on the part of his feeble and fallen opponents?

And, 8, Whether, in morals, it be not as ridiculous to pretend that facts illustrate themselves by growing older, as in physics to maintain that objects become more distinct in proportion as they remove farther from us?

I shall be very happy if even the imperfections of my work should give occasion to the accomplishment of a better, and determine some philosophic mind to treat profoundly the important questions which I have only pointed out, particularly those of *the authority of testimony*, and *the conditions required for certainty*; subjects which have never been properly discussed, but which form the

pivot

pivot of almost all our knowledge, or, according to the phrase of Helvetius, of our *acquired ignorance.*

For my part, the comparison of the prejudices and habits of different individuals and nations, has convinced, and nearly freed me of those of my education and my country. Having travelled from one country to another, and traced the alterations and various shades of rumours and statements, the origin of which I had wisnessed; having observed very false notions of events connected with the French revolution entertained in the United States, and in the like manner recognized the errors of those generally received in France with respect to many circumstances of the American revolution,

which

which are already disguised by national pride, or the spirit of party, I cannot avoid confessing that I become daily more inclined to refuse my confidence to historians and to history. Indeed I know not whether I am most astonished at the carelessness with which even thinking men *believe* on the most frivolous grounds, or their obstinacy in acting from their first impressions.—Every day I see new reasons for concluding that the disposition of mind most favourable to instruction, the discovery of truth, and the peace and happiness of individuals and nations, is *to believe with difficulty*. In taking advantage, therefore, of my title of *Professor*, with which the Government has honoured me, were I to recommend any one precept to parents, who are the natural

natural instructors of their children, and to teachers of every kind, it would be, not to subject the *belief* of their pupils to a magisterial authority—not to habituate them to an implicit reliance in the relations of others, to the belief of what they do not understand. On the contrary, I would warn them against that double inclination to *credulity* and *confidence*, the influence of which is the more powerful in consequence of its being derived from the ignorance, the indolence, and the pride natural to man. In a word, I would advise them to establish the system of instruction and education, not on the facts of any Ideal World, the aspects of which are constantly varying and subject to endless controversy, but on the facts of the Physical World, the

knowledge of which being always reducible to the demonstration of evidence, presents a certain basis for judgment or opinion, and alone merits the name of Philosophy and Science.

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LECTURES
ON
HISTORY.

LECTURE I.

PROGRAM.

Object, Plan, and Distribution of the Study of History.

HISTORY, considered as a science, differs essentially from the physical and mathematical sciences. In physical science the facts are permanent: they may be said to live, and are capable of being presented to the spectator, or re-exhibited to the witness. In history the facts exist no longer: they are dead, and cannot be resuscitated to the view of the spectator,

nor confronted with the witness. Physical science addresses itself immediately to the senses. History addresses itself only to the imagination and the memory. Hence, there exists an important difference as to the degree of credit belonging to physical, or what may be called *existing* facts, and historical, or what may be called *related* facts. Physical facts carry with them evidence and certainty, because they are obvious, and display themselves bodily on the unchangeable stage of the universe. Historical facts, on the contrary, floating like phantoms in the irregular mirror of the human understanding, where they connect themselves with the most extravagant fancies, can only reach *likelihood* and *probability*. It is necessary, therefore, to estimate the degree of credibility that is due to them, and to examine them carefully under two points of view: 1. That of their own essence, that is to say, their analogy or incompatibility with physical facts of the same species still existing and known—This constitutes *possibility*.

2. That

2. That of scrutinizing the narrators and witnesses with regard to their moral faculties, their means of information, and their impartiality—This constitutes *moral probability*. This operation is a complicated judgment formed from a twofold consideration; and the fleeting nature of the objects renders the decision very delicate, and susceptible of a multiplicity of errors.

Applying those observations to the most eminent of ancient and modern historians, we propose, in the course of these Lectures, to examine what character history maintains among different nations, and, particularly, what character it has assumed during the preceding century. We shall likewise point out the remarkable differences which have occurred in the historical genius of the same nation, according to the gradation of its mathemat.cal and physical knowledge. From these inquiries a number of important questions will arise.

1. What degree of certainty, or what confidence ought we to attach to historical narrations, both in general and in particular cases?

2. What importance ought we to attribute to historical facts; and what advantage or inconvenience results from our opinion of that importance?

3. What social and practical utility may we propose to ourselves, either in the teaching, or the studying of history?

In resolving these questions, we shall have occasion to inquire what rank the study of history ought to hold in public instruction; whether that study is proper for primary schools; and what parts of history are best suited to the different ages or professions of the students.

We shall next consider what men ought to devote themselves to the instructing of others in history; what method is preferable for teaching it; from what sources historical

historical knowledge ought to be derived, and whence its materials should be collected; what requisites the historian ought to possess, and what precautions he ought to exercise; in what manner the subject ought to be treated; how the different subjects should be distributed; and, finally, what is the influence which historians possess over the opinion of posterity, the operations of government, and the fate of nations.

After examining history as a narrative of facts, and the facts themselves as a *course of involuntary experiments which mankind undergo*, we shall endeavour to take a rapid view of universal history, in order to collect its most interesting truths. Then, turning our attention to the nations most celebrated for knowledge and civilization, we shall trace the rise and the progress,

1. Of the arts—such as agriculture, commerce, navigation:

2. Of different sciences—such as astro-

nomy, geography, experimental philosophy:

3. Of private and public morals; examining at the same time what ideas have been entertained on those subjects at different periods:

4. Finally, we shall observe the march and the progress of legislation: we shall mark the rise of the most remarkable civil and religious codes: we shall inquire in what order those codes have been transmitted from nation to nation, and from generation to generation; what effects they have produced on the customs, the manners, and the character of nations; what analogy the manners and the character of a people preserve with the climate and the physical state of the soil which they inhabit; what changes are produced in their manners, by transmigrations, and the intermixture of different races: and, taking a general view of the present state of the globe, we shall conclude by proposing the examination of the two following questions:—

1. What

1. What is the degree of civilization to which it may be estimated mankind have attained?

2. What general indications result from history, for perfecting civilization, and for ameliorating the condition of the human species?

LECTURE II.

The literal meaning of the word HISTORY *is an* EXAMINATION *or* INQUEST *of Facts.—Modesty of the ancient, and temerity of the modern, Historians.—The Historian who writes on Testimony, performs the part of a Judge, and remains an intermediate Witness with respect to his Readers.—Extreme Difficulty of proving the real state of a Fact—Difficulty, on the part of the Spectator, of accurately observing it—Difficulty, on the part of the Narrator, of accurately describing it.—Numerous Causes of Error, originating in Deception, Prejudice, Negligence, Omission, Partiality, &c.*

WE have briefly indicated the course we propose to pursue. The plan will perhaps appear well conceived, both with respect to its extent, and its object; but, at the same time, the difficulty of the execution cannot

cannot be dissembled. This difficulty consists chiefly in three points:—

1. The novelty of the subject; for we shall not confine our attention to one or a few nations, on which every interest is accumulated, while all others are despised, and no reason assigned for such conduct, except that of voluntary neglect. This certainly will be a new method of treating history.

2. The complication which naturally arises from the extent, as well as the importance, of a subject embracing so many facts and events—a subject which considers the whole human species as one society, and nations as individuals; and which retraces the existence of those individuals to collect numerous and repeated facts, the results of which constitute what are called principles and rules; for principles in morals are not fixed and abstract *criteria* existing independently of human nature. On the contrary, *principles are summary and general facts*, resulting from the addition of particular facts, and

thereby becoming not *tyrannical rules* of conduct,—but the bases of calculations *approximating* likelihood and probability *.

3. The nature of the subject; for, as we have observed in the Program, historical facts not being represented to the senses, but merely to the memory, they do not carry with them that conviction which admits of no doubt. They always leave behind them a degree of uncertainty, on which opinion and private judgement will decide. But whenever we refer to private judgment and opinion, we touch delicate and dangerous cords, on the

* For example, analize the fundamental principle of the present movements in Europe—*All men are born equal as to rights.* What is this maxim, but a *collective and summary fact*, deduced from a multitude of particular facts? in this manner: Having compared all mankind, or at least an immense number of individuals, with each other, and finding them all furnished with similar organs or faculties, we discover, by way of *addition*, *the total fact*, that they are all *born equal as to rights.* What *a right* is, still remains to be defined; and that definition is more difficult than is generally imagined.

the vibration of which, self-love is ready to take arms. In this respect we shall observe the rules of prudence, which equality, in its true sense, that of justice, prescribes. When we do not adopt, or when we shall think it necessary to reject the opinions of others, recollecting that they have an *equal right* to defend them, and that persuasion alone should be used to produce conviction, we shall pay to those opinions that respect and tolerance which we are entitled to claim for our own.

In the other sciences which are taught in this amphitheatre, the path to be pursued is already marked out, either by the natural order of the facts, or by the well-digested methods of the authors. In history, such as we regard it, the path is new, and has no model. We have some books that bear the title of *Universal Histories*; but besides the declamatory style which distinguishes the most celebrated works of this kind, they have the still greater fault of being only the *partial histories* of

tribes, or the panegyrics of families. The classical writers of Europe have treated only of Greeks, Romans, and Jews; because, if we are not the descendants, we are at least the heirs of those people, with respect to civil and religious laws, language, science, and territory. Thus it appears to me, that history has not yet been treated in that comprehensive manner which ought to distinguish it as a science, particularly in a nation that has risen to so eminent a degree of knowledge and philosophy as to despise the savage and ferocious selfishness by which the ancients concentrated as it were the universe in a city or a tribe, and consecrated their hatred of every other people under the name of *patriotism*, instead of regarding them with the aspect of fraternity; a disposition of mind, which, while it does not preclude a just self-defence, makes room for all the finer sentiments of family and kindred.

The difficulties we have described, render

it highly necessary to observe order and method in treating a subject so extensive. As a first step, let us inquire what we ought to understand by the word *history*: for words, being signs of ideas, possess more importance than is sometimes attached to them. They are like the titles of books, which frequently mislead: it is always prudent to open them, if we would judge rightly of their contents.

The word *history* appears to have had a different acceptation among the ancients, from that which it has obtained in modern times. The Greeks, who framed it, understood by it *a minute inquiry, a careful examination*. In this sense it is employed by Herodotus. Among the moderns, on the contrary, the word *history* is applied to *narrative* or *recital*, even when it has no pretence to veracity. The ancients searched for truth; the moderns pretend they possess it. This is a rash conceit, when we consider how difficult truth is to be found in every investigation, and particularly

larly in those which relate to political occurrences. It was, doubtless, this conviction that induced the ancients to adopt so modest a term, and, impressed with the same sentiment, we shall always consider the word *history* as synonymous with *inquiry, examination, study of facts.*

History, indeed, is merely an inquest of facts, and of facts which reach us only through the medium of other persons; an examination or hearing of witnesses is therefore always supposed to have taken place. The historian, who knows his duty, must consider himself as standing in the situation of a judge, who, calling before him the reporters and the witnesses of a fact, confronts them, interrogates them, and endeavours to arrive at the truth, that is to say, at the state of a fact *such as it has existed.* Not witnessing the fact himself, and having no opportunity of convincing his senses, it is obvious that he never can reach complete certainty, and that he can judge only by analogy.

Hence

Hence results the necessity of considering historical facts under a double relation; 1. with respect to their essence; 2. with respect to their evidence.

With respect to their essence, facts, as they are to be found in nature, or in the system of the universe, have but one manner of existence,—a manner which is constant and uniform, and which renders the rule of decision simple and invariable. If the facts related be consistent with the known laws of nature; if they be in the order of existing or possible things, they acquire, in the eyes of the historian, likelihood or probability: but hence originates a difference in the decisions which may be pronounced on the same facts; for every one judges of probability and likelihood according to the nature and the extent of his knowledge. To reason by analogy on an unknown fact, it is necessary to know some fact to which it may be compared. A correct measure must be applied to it. Thus the sphere

of analogies is extended, or narrowed, in proportion to the degree of knowledge already acquired. This tends, in many cases to diminish the circle of judgment, and consequently of certainty: but this, perhaps, is no great inconvenience; for, as an eastern proverb justly observes, *He who much believes, is much deceived.* If there *be a right*, not to yield belief to what the conscience rejects, and to doubt when we cannot comprehend, will certainly be allowed to be one. Herodotus has set us an example which deserves to be quoted on this occasion. Speaking of the voyage of a Phœnician vessel, which Nechos king of Egypt dispatched by the Red Sea, and which three years afterwards returned by the Mediterranean, he says, "The Phœnicians related, on their return, that, in sailing round Libya, they had the sun upon their right: This story seemed to me by no means credible; but perhaps it may be believed by others." This circumstance is with us the strongest proof of the fact, and the conduct of Herodotus,

who decided erroneously upon it, appears to me highly commendable; 1st, for reporting it without any addition or alteration; 2d, for not having exceeded the bounds of his own information, and for not believing, on the report of others, what he could not comprehend by his knowledge. Ancient historians and geographers, who were more presumptuous, Strabo for example, have, upon their imperfect knowledge, decided that the story was false: But their error, which is now demonstrated, is a useful warning to us to avoid pronouncing judgment from the dictates of prejudice, and with imperfect information. The maxims of prudence require that we should withhold our assent from propositions which we do not understand. This is really a natural right, a duty of reason; for the measure of conviction ought to be the only rule of our judgment; and, whenever we exceed its bounds, we are hurried from the belief of what we know not to what is improbable, and from improbability to

to extravagancies and absurdities of every kind.

The second point of view under which facts ought to be examined, is that of their proof. This investigation is much more difficult and complicated than the former. The rules in this case are not fixed and constant, like those of nature; on the contrary, they are variable, as those of the human understanding, which may be compared to those mirrors with crooked and irregular planes, that have amused you (when you attended lectures on natural philosophy) by the fantastic appearances under which they represent objects. This comparison will perhaps appear to you the more just, as it is capable of a twofold application: for if, on the one hand, as is unfortunately too often the case, natural objects, which are always regular, should appear distorted when painted on the understanding; on the other hand, the caricatures which the mind has produced, when re-submitted to reflection, may,

may, by the same rules, be corrected in an inverse manner, and recover the rational forms of their first type, which was *Nature*.

The understanding may be regarded as a moveable wave, which disfigures objects by its various undulations; first, and most frequently, by those of passion, and next by those of negligence, imperfect judgement, and ignorance. These are points on which the *searcher of truth*, the historian, ought constantly to interrogate his witnesses. But is he not also liable to the same errors? He is a man; and are not negligence, ignorance, and prejudice, always the attendants of human nature? Consider, for a moment, what happens with respect to accounts that reach us from the third or fourth hand. Do you not imagine that you see a natural object which is reflected by a first glass to a second, by the second to a third, and so on from glass to glass, acquiring new shades, deviations, and undulations from each? Can you suppose that, under such circumstances, a correct

rect representation will be transmitted to you? Must not the mere translation from one language into another produce a considerable alteration in the shades of thought, without taking into the account those verbal mistakes which frequently occur? But mark what happens every day, in the same language, the same country, and under your own eyes. An event occurs in the very city in which you live.—Listen to the accounts which different witnesses give of it.—Frequently no two agree as to the circumstances, and sometimes they differ with regard to the most material facts. This may be experienced in a manner sufficiently amusing in travelling. A transaction takes place in one town; you have even witnessed it yourself: but advance ten leagues, and you hear it related in a new manner; echoed from town to town, you at last find it scarce possible to recognize the origin of the story, and, struck at the confidence of others, you are tempted to distrust your own.

Now,

Now, if it be difficult to prove the *precise existence*, that is to say, the truth, of *facts* that occur among ourselves, how much greater must this difficulty have been among the ancients, who had not the means of arriving at certainty that we possess? I shall not at present enter into the details connected with this part of my subject, as I intend to treat of it more fully in another Lecture. But, after having touched on the natural difficulties of discovering truth, I shall take notice of that which rises out of the passions of the relator and the witnesses, or what is called partiality. This I shall divide into two branches, viz. *Voluntary partiality*, and *Compulsory partiality*. The latter, which is inspired by fear, necessarily exists in all despotic states, where the publication of facts would be a perpetual censure on the government. In such states, if a man have the courage to relate the most notorious truth, and what public opinion most decisively proclaims, his book cannot be printed, or, if printed, it cannot

be

be circulated; thus it becomes a natural consequence of the existing order of things, that no man dare divulge his thoughts on public affairs through the medium of the press; or, if he undertake so hazardous an enterprize, he must write equivocally, and practise concealment, dissimulation and falsehood. Such, however, is the character of the greater part of histories.

The effects of voluntary partiality are still more extensive. The causes which, in the former case, produce silence, are in this motives for writing; and the author who acts under their influence feels a pleasure in propagating falsehood and error. In the former case, the author is constantly menaced by tyrants; in the latter, they encourage him. They pay for his praises, and stimulate his exertions; and, having imposed upon their own times by their actions, they impose upon posterity by their hired panegyrists.

I have not alluded to an involuntary,

but

but not less powerful kind of partiality; I mean that which arises from the civil or religious prejudices in which we are educated. In taking a general view of authors, it is difficult to discover any who have been totally free from prejudices of this nature. The influence of prejudice operated powerfully even among the ancients. Indeed, when we consider that in our tenderest age every thing that surrounds us conspires to impregnate us with prejudice—that opinions and ideas are infused into us by habit, by affection, by force, by persuasion, by threats and by promises—that our reason is encircled by sacred boundaries, over which we are prohibited to step; it is not surprising that the human mind should become a *fabric of error*. But when, upon examining ourselves, we see reason to believe that under similar circumstances we should have adopted the errors of others—and that if we have discovered truths, we perhaps owe our good fortune only to the accidental advantages we possess over those

those who preceded us, far from entertaining sentiments of pride, or testifying a contempt for other times, we should rejoice that we live in a period of liberty, in which men are permitted to think agreeably to the dictates of nature and conscience. Fearing, however, from the example of others, that even conscience itself may be under error, we should not make a contradictory and tyrannical use of the liberty we enjoy; but, if unity of opinion cannot be obtained, we ought at least to seek, in toleration, the common utility of peace.

In the next Lecture we shall inquire what materials for history, and what means of information were possessed by the ancients, and, comparing their civil and moral state with that of the moderns, we shall point out the revolution which the press has produced in that branch of study, and in knowledge in general.

LECTURE III.

Continuation of the same Subject.—Four principal Classes of Historians, with the different degrees of authority that belong to each. 1. Historians who have acted a part in the events they record. 2. Historians who only have witnessed those events. 3. Historians who have received their information from witnesses. 4. Historians on hearsay or tradition.—The inevitable corruption of accounts transmitted by report.—Absurdity of the Traditions of distant times, common to all nations.—They have their origin in the nature of the human understanding.—The character of History always proportionate to the degree of ignorance or civilization of a people.—Character of History among the ancients, and among nations unacquainted with the art of printing.—Effects of the press upon History.—The change it has produced in

modern Historians.—The temper of mind best suited to the study of History.—The absurdity of doubting every thing, less dangerous than that of doubting nothing.—Reasons for being cautious in our belief.

From what has been said, it will be admitted, that, in estimating the certainty of historical facts, it is necessary to consider well what is the character of the relators and witnesses with respect to,

1. Their means of information.

2. The extent to which they possess the moral faculties of sagacity and discernment.

3. Their interests and affections:—from which result three kinds of partiality, *viz.* that of constraint, that of seduction, and that of the prejudices of birth and education; this last, however excusable it may appear, is exceedingly powerful, and pernicious in its influence, since the passions and interests of whole nations are at once its origin and support; and nations,

tions, being not less obstinate, and far more insolent in their errors, than individuals, exercise over their members the most arbitrary and oppressive of despotisms—that of national prejudice, whether civil or religious.

We shall have more than one occasion to consider the different gradations that take place in the value of evidence: at present, continuing to develope the same question, we shall examine the degree of authority that belongs to testimony, according to its greater or less distance from facts and events.

In investigating the character of the different witnesses or relators of historical occurrences, we find they may be divided into several gradual and successive classes, which are proportionally more or less entitled to our belief. The Historian who records transactions in which he has performed a part, ranks in the first class: Of this kind are the greater part of the authors

of personal memoirs, of civil transactions, travels, &c. Facts which reach us immediately from authors of this description, are liable to the least misrepresentation in the transmission. The relation possesses the highest degree of authenticity; but our belief in it ought still to be subject to all the moral considerations of interest, affection, and sagacity, of which we have spoken: these considerations will always diminish the credit of a Historian writing under the influence of the highest degree of personal interest.

Writers of this description are, therefore, entitled to our belief in so far only as their relations possess,

1. Probability. It must be confessed that some histories exhibit so natural a concourse of events and circumstances, so well connected a series of causes and effects, that our confidence is involuntarily given to the authors, and we may be said to recognize in their relations the *stamp of truth*, or rather that of *conscience*.

2. The

2. The support of other evidence equally subject to the laws of probability. Hence it follows, that, even in their highest degree of credibility, historical relations undergo all the judicial formalities of the hearing and examination of witnesses, which a long and accumulated experience has introduced into the jurisprudence of nations: consequently, one author, like one witness, has no right to require our implicit confidence. It is indeed an error to regard a fact as proved, which is only supported by the evidence of one individual; for, if several witnesses could have been called, some modification, if not contradiction, would certainly have occurred. Cæsar's Commentaries are commonly regarded as an historical document, which, on account of the situation of its author, and his remaining uncontradicted, possesses an eminent character of certainty. *Suetonius*, however, informs us, that *Asinius Pollio* remarked in his Annals, that a number of facts were not correctly stated by Cæsar, because he had frequently been

led into errors by the reports of his officers; and that Pollio, whose character as consul, and the friend of Horace and Virgil, gives weight to his testimony, hinted that Cæsar had personal motives for disguising the truth.

The second class is that of authors who have witnessed the transactions they record, but who have not been actively engaged in them, and whose writings are therefore less liable to the suspicion of being composed under the influence of personal interest. Their testimony, in most cases, inspires much more confidence than that of authors of the former description, and is invested with a higher degree of credibility. It is still, however, subject to the conditions of probability, and is to be judged, 1. according to the quantity of evidence; 2. according to the corroboration of evidence; 3. according to the indispensable rules which we have laid down, of sound judgment, accurate observation, and impartiality. The daily ex-

perience

perience of every thing that passes around us demonstrates, that, to prove even a notorious fact with accuracy and precision, is a delicate operation, and accompanied with a multitude of difficulties: the student of history ought therefore to be peculiarly cautious in admitting, as unquestionable, any fact which has not undergone the most rigorous investigation, and which is not supported by evidence at once sufficient in quantity and quality.

The third class is that of the *hearers of evidence*; that is, those who receive information of facts from the mouths of witnesses. They are pretty near to the first source of intelligence; yet there is suddenly introduced, in this case, a material difference as to the correctness of the narrative, and the precision of the pictures exhibited. The witnesses have seen and heard the facts they recount; their senses have been strongly impressed by them; but, in painting them on the understanding, they imprint, even contrary

to their wishes, modifications which vitiate their forms; and these forms become still more vitiated when they are reflected from this first undulating and moveable mirror to a second, which is equally variable. Hence a fact is no longer a fixed and positive being, as it exists in nature, but becomes a fantastic image, transmitted from mind to mind, and is susceptible of all the variations which omission, confusion, and the addition of circumstances can create. It is discussed, criticised, variously interpreted and translated. All these operations alter its native purity, and require that we should here make an important distinction between the two means employed in transmitting the knowledge of facts, speech and writing.

When a fact is transmitted by writing, its state becomes fixed, and it preserves immutably that kind of authority which it derives from the character of the narrator. It may have been previously disfigured,

figured, but as it has been committed to paper, so it remains; and if, as it frequently happens, different minds give to it different interpretations, they are still obliged to recur to that type which, if not original, is at least positive: besides, every written document possesses this farther advantage, that, notwithstanding the intervals of time and space, it transmits facts immediately as they existed, or as they have been recorded: it brings the author before us; it summons him from among the dead; and, at the distance of thousands of years, introduces us to a conversation with *Cicero*, *Homer*, *Confucius*, &c. Nothing more is necessary than to prove that the writing is not apocryphal, and that it is really the work of the person whose name it bears. If it is anonymous, it loses a degree of authenticity: as its author is concealed, its testimony should be submitted to the investigation of a severe criticism, and it will necessarily be liable to all the suspicion which clandestine transactions never fail

to excite. If the work has been translated, it loses nothing of its authenticity; but in passing from one language to another, the facts are removed one degree farther from their origin, and they always receive a colouring, which is more or less faint or vivid, according to the disposition and ability of the translator: still, however, we have the opportunity of examining the original, and rectifying any mis-statements that may have been made.

In the transmission of facts by speech or tradition, we are deprived of this resource. In this case, all the caprices, all the eccentricities of the human mind are brought into action. It is easy to conceive, that facts which are transmitted from mouth to mouth, and from generation to generation, must undergo considerable alterations, when we frequently see an individual, at different periods, vary in his account of the same occurrences, according as he experiences the influence of a change of interests or feelings. Con-

dulence in tradition as, therefore, generally decried, and becomes more unpardonable in proportion as it is removed by great intervals of time and place from its original source. We may at any time have incontrovertible proofs of the inaccuracy of tradition. Whoever will take the trouble to collect, either in country villages, or in towns, the traditions of the old people relative to the events of the age of Louis XIV, or even of a later period, will find an immense corruption of facts, a confusion of circumstances, and a complete inconsistency established between the different witnesses and the different narrators. A striking proof of this variation exists in the history of the battle of Fontenoy, of which we have a multitude of irreconcilable accounts. Now, if such omissions, confusion and alterations take place in times otherwise enlightened, in a country already polished, and which possesses the means of correcting those errors, what must happen among nations where the arts are in their infancy or decay,

where disorder has reigned, or still reigns, in the social system, ignorance in the moral system, and where there prevails an indifference to every thing except objects of the first necessity? The testimony of the most accurate travellers of our own times, relative to savage nations, or even such as are called civilized, affords us a proof of that improbability of relation, and that absurdity of tradition, to which we allude. Traditions are in many respects unworthy of notice, even in Asia, whence their origin has been derived. This will be readily assented to, upon considering the ignorance of the natives with regard to the facts and dates, which ought most to interest them. The Indians, the Arabs, the Turks, and the Tartars, are in general incapable of giving an account of their own age, or of that of their relations.

It is by tradition, however, by narratives transmitted from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation, that all

history

history must necessarily have commenced. This necessity is demonstrated by natural facts still subsisting, by the organization of man, and by the mechanism of the formation of society.

Indeed, since it is certain, that man is born completely ignorant and devoid of art; that all his ideas are the fruits of his sensations, all his knowledge the acquisition of his personal experience, or of the accumulated experience of anterior generations;—since it is certain, that writing is an art extremely complicated in the principles of its invention; that even speech is another art which has preceded it, and to form which an immense series of ages must have elapsed—it may be concluded, with physical certainty, that the empire of tradition extended through all the duration of ages which preceded the invention of writing. I will even add the invention of the alphabetic writing; for it alone can paint all the shades of facts, all the modifications of thought;

other

other writing, which represents figures and not sounds, such as the *hieroglyphics* of the Egyptians, the *notes* or *quippos* of the Peruvians, or the *pictures* of the Mexicans, is only capable of exhibiting the basis or principal point of facts, and leaves all the variety of circumstances and connections in uncertainty. Now, as it is demonstrated, by facts and by reasoning, that the arts of writing and of language are the result of the social state, which is itself the offspring of circumstances and wants, it is evident that all that edifice of wants and circumstances, of arts and of social institutions, has preceded the empire of written history.

Meanwhile it may be remarked, that the inverse proof of those physical facts exists even in the nature of the first relations exhibited by history. Indeed if, as we have said, it belongs to the constitution of the human mind often to receive the images of facts very inaccurately, and to alter them in proportion as it is unin-

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formed and unaccustomed to reason, it follows, as a direct consequence, that the more barbarous nations may have been, the more will the commencement of their history be distinguished by every thing that is irrational, contrary to nature and sound judgment. Take a view of histories in general, and you will find that they all commence in the manner I have described; that their details are chimerical and extravagant, in proportion as they ascend to periods of great antiquity, and are connected with the origin of nations: on the contrary, as history approaches to known times, to ages in which the arts, police, and the moral system have made a considerable progress, it assumes the character of probability, and exhibits a physical and moral state of things, analogous to that which we at present experience. Thus, in comparing the history of all countries, we arrive at this conclusion, that its representations are inconsistent with nature and reason, in proportion as the condition

dition of nations approaches to that of savages, which is the primitive state of every people; and that, on the contrary, its representations are more analogous to the order with which we are acquainted, in proportion as those nations become enlightened, polished, and civilized. This is obvious when we arrive at those ages in which the arts and sciences begin to flourish; for we then find that a multitude of miraculous events, prodigies, and monsters of every kind, disappear before their lustre, as the phantoms, ghosts, and spectres with which a sickly and timid imagination peoples the obscurity and silence of night, vanish before the rays of the morning sun.

Let us then establish a maxim, pregnant with most important consequences in the study of history:

"That we may calculate, with a kind "of accuracy, the degree of knowledge "and civilization which prevails among a "people

"people by the nature of their historical "relations."—or, in terms still more general,

"That history takes its character from "the period of its composition."

This maxim naturally directs our attention to the comparison of two very important periods, in which history has been composed under very opposite circumstances, and with very different means of information. I mean the period of manuscript, and the period of printed history. You know that until towards the conclusion of the fifteenth century all books were in manuscript—that it was only in 1440 that John Guttemberg, of immortal memory, made his first essay in the art of printing. He was followed by his associates Fusth and Scheffer, who made their first characters in wood, and afterwards in metal; and by this simple and ingenious invention instantaneously obtained an infinite number of repetitions or copies of the first model. This fortu-

nate

one innovation produced a change in the subject of which we treat, which it is of importance to remark.

When writing was the only means by which books could be produced, the time which such a laborious operation required, and the expence which it occasioned, rendered copies exceedingly scarce and dear. Works of literature, of course, were created with much difficulty, but easily destroyed. One copyist slowly brought forth an *individual* book; the press in a moment gives birth to a *generation*. Hence the procuring of books, and, consequently, opportunities of instruction of every kind, were opposed by numerous difficulties of the most discouraging nature. Original copies being few, and confined to the possession of rich individuals or public libraries, the number of persons who could collect materials for the composition of historical works was necessarily very limited. Their statements were not so liable to be questioned as those of modern

modern writers, and they might omit or alter facts with greater impunity. The circle of their readers being very confined, their judges and censors were proportionably few. There was no public opinion; every question was decided by the spirit of faction or prejudice, and passion alone influenced the judgment.

On the contrary, since the discovery of the art of printing, a work once proved to be authentic may, by the multiplication of copies, be submitted to an extensive examination, and to the critical discussion of an immense number of readers. To vitiate the text of an author, and to avoid detection, is no longer an easy task; and thus historical certainty has acquired a real advantage.

It must be confessed, that the number of years which the composition of a book required among the ancients, and the still longer time necessary for its distribution before it could be said to be known, af-

forded

forded the opportunity of divulging bold truths, because time had destroyed or removed the greater part of those who were interested in the narration; and thus clandestine publication was favourable to historical veracity: but it was also an encouragement to partiality. If errors were thus established, it became less easy to refute them, as there were few who had the means of investigating them. But private circulation being equally in the power of the moderns, while they possess the means of combating its inconveniences, the advantage appears to be entirely on their side.

The nature of the circumstances of which I have spoken, tended, among the ancients, to concentrate both the study and the composition of history within a very narrow circle, consisting almost entirely of the rich, and men in public situations; for, to be acquainted with facts, it was necessary to have been actually engaged in public affairs: indeed, we shall frequently

frequently have occasion to remark, that the greater part of the Greek and Roman historians were generals, magistrates, and men of fortune or of distinguished rank. In the eastern countries, priests, that class who, by the exclusive possession of learning and the distribution of knowledge, had invested themselves with the most powerful of all monopolies, were almost the only historians. Hence that character of dignity and elevation which distinguishes the authors of antiquity, and which was the natural and even necessary consequence of the cultivated education they had received.

The art of printing having increased and facilitated the means of reading and composition, authorship has become an object of commerce, and modern writers have assumed a mercantile boldness, a rash confidence, which frequently debases history, and profanes the sanctity of its object.

It is true that antiquity had likewise its compilers and literary impostors; but the fatigue of copying their works prevented the lumber from descending to succeeding ages. Thus far the difficulty of multiplying books has been of service to science.

But this advantage of the ancients was, on the other hand, counterbalanced by a very serious inconvenience—the well-founded suspicion of an almost inavoidable partiality, 1, by the spirit of personality, the ramifications of which extended in proportion as the writer had been actively engaged in the transactions he recorded, and influenced in his political sentiments by interest or passion; 2d, by the spirit of family and consanguinity, which, among the ancients, and particularly in Greece and Italy, constituted a spirit of general and indelible faction. It may be here remarked, that a work composed by an individual of a family became the common property of that family,

mily, who espoused the opinions of the writer, which indeed were but the offspring of their own prejudices. Thus a manuscript of the family of the Fabii, or the Scipios, was transmitted from age to age by inheritance; and if there existed in a less powerful family a manuscript which tended to disprove it, they seized it, and considered the prize an important victory. This was, in miniature, what the spirit of hostile states was upon a larger scale—that selfish, proud, and intolerant spirit, by which the Greeks and Romans, the enemies of the universe, were prompted to destroy the writings of other nations, and thus deprive us of the *pleadings* for the *plaintiffs* in the *celebrated cause* of their rapine. In this manner have they almost rendered us accomplices in their tyranny, by the giddy admiration and secret emulation with which their criminal triumphs inspire us.

But, among the moderns, in vain is an historical work environed with secrecy,

supported

supported by the credit of wealth, defended by the spirit of faction or family, and protected by all the power of authority. The investigation of a single day, the slightest opposition, is sufficient to raise doubts, and to overthrow an edifice of falsehood which the labour of years may have been necessary to erect. Such is the signal service the liberty of the press renders to truth, that the most obscure individual, if he have the virtues and the talents of an historian, may brave the indignation of nations, while he censures their errors and condemns their prejudices: though, indeed, it will perhaps be found, that the errors, the prejudices and the resentments which are generally ascribed to nations, belong, in reality, not to the people, but to their governors.

Accustomed as we are to the uniform influence of the press, we are not sufficiently sensible of all the moral and political advantages it produces. To estimate the effects of its privation, it is necessary

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to have lived in a country where the art of printing does not exist. There we soon feel what confusion in accounts, absurdity in reports, uncertainty in opinions, obstacles to information, and general ignorance, the want of books and newspapers creates. History owes benedictions to him who first published articles of intelligence in Venice, for the little piece of money called a *gazetta*; the name of which journals of news still bear. Gazettes, indeed, are historical monuments of infinite importance; they are instructive and valuable even in their deviations from strict impartiality; since they thereby exhibit the prevailing spirit of the times in which they were published; and their contradictions always afford materials for the elucidation of facts. Thus, when we are informed that the first thing the Anglo-Americans do in forming their new establishments is to cut a road and to commence a newspaper, it appears to me, that, in this double operation, they attain the object, and exhibit the analysis, of every good

social system: for *society* is nothing more than the *easy* and *free communication of persons and thoughts*; and all the art of government consists in preventing those violent shocks which tend to its destruction. As a contrast to this people, civilized as it were in the cradle, let us take a view of the nations of Asia, which have passed from infancy to decay, and, through every stage of their progress, have still been ignorant and barbarous. Doubtless they have been confined to this condition, because they neither knew the art of printing, nor were capable of constructing roads or canals.

Such is the power of the press—such its influence upon civilization—that is to say, on the developement of all the faculties of man in the manner most useful to society—that the epoch of its invention divides the political and moral state of nations, as well as their history, into two distinct and different systems. Its existence so precisely marks the possession of know-

knowledge, that to know whether a people be civilized or barbarous, it is only necessary to ask the following questions: Does the art of printing flourish among them? Have they the liberty of the press?

Now, as it is certain that the situation of the ancients very much resembled the present state of Asia; as, even in countries considered free, the governments were always influenced by a mysterious spirit of party or faction, and privileged interests, which detached them from the people; and as they had the means of preventing or paralyzing every publication that might give them displeasure; it is reasonable to suppose that the authors of those times wrote under the influence of partiality, either compulsory or voluntary. How, for example, can it be expected that Titus Livy should have dared to paint in true colours the odious policy of the Roman senate, which, to divert the people from their claims long made with justice and moderation, fomented wars that, dur-

ing five hundred years, spread destruction over the earth; and which, when the plunder of the universe was amassed in Rome, as in the den of a banditti, finished its career by presenting the disgusting spectacle of robbers intoxicated with their enjoyments, and still insatiable, murdering one another at the division of the booty! Turn over the pages of Dionysius Halicarnassius, Polybius, and even Tacitus himself; and you will not meet with those emotions of indignation which the picture of the horrors they have transmitted to us ought to have excited. How unfortunate the historian who does not feel such emotions!—How miserable the age that compels him to suppress them!

From all these considerations I conclude, that, in the study of History, it is a delicate task to seize, and a difficult one to establish, the precise point of truth; and that the degree of certainty we may admit, cannot be rational, unless it be submitted to a calculation of probability. I

have dwelt upon the necessity of this calculation, because I am sensible of its importance, not in an abstract and speculative point of view, but as a useful maxim, applicable to every circumstance of life: for every individual life is a personal history, in which the events of yesterday become the subject of reflection to-day, and of resolution to-morrow. Now, if it be true that happiness depends upon those resolutions, and the resolutions on the soundness of the reflections, it is of importance to consider what disposition of mind is best calculated for these operations. Here three alternatives present themselves:—*to believe every thing*—*to believe nothing*—or, *to believe by calculation.* Every one, in making his selection from these different modes, is influenced by taste; or, I should rather say, by habit and temperament; for temperament governs the bulk of mankind, and acts more powerfully in consequence of their not perceiving its effects. Some men exercise the powers of abstraction so far as to doubt

the evidence of their senses: Such, it is said, was Pyrrho, whose celebrity in this kind of error has procured for it the appellation of *Pyrrhonism*: But if Pyrrho, who so much doubted his own existence as to display no uneasiness when about to perish in a storm, and who regarded death and life with so much indifference that he did not commit suicide merely because he could not find motives to determine his choice, received from the Greeks the title of a *Philosopher*, he has received from philosophers that of a *Lunatic*, and from physicians that of a *Valetudinarian*. Indeed, rational medicine teaches, that this apathy and perversity of mind is the physical consequence of a nervous system, blunted or exhausted by the fatigues of a life too contemplative, and divested of sensations, or by the excess of passions too ardent, and too powerfully excited, which leave nothing behind them but the ashes of a consumed sensibility.

But if Pyrrhonism is a chronical malady which

which seldom occurs, attaches itself only to minds and temperaments of a feeble kind, and is at worst merely ridiculous; doubting nothing, on the contrary, is a more common and a much more dangerous disease. It is the violent fever of an energetic constitution, which acquires by example a contagious intensity, and terminates by exciting the convulsions of enthusiasm and the phrensy of fanaticism. Such are the periods of the progress of this malady of the understanding, that an opinion being once admitted from indolence or neglect, the mind becomes attached to it, and maintains it to be just from habit: It is defended from obstinacy and self-love; and, soon passing from the defence to the attack, the believer, influenced by that self-esteem called *pride*, and that desire of domination which seeks in the exercise of power the unlimited gratification of every passion, proceeds to impose his *creed* upon others.

It may be remarked of Fanaticism and

Pyrrhonism, that, though they are extremes diametrically opposite to each other, they have one common source, which is *ignorance*;—with this difference, however, that *Pyrrhonism is a feeble ignorance, which never judges*; and that *Fanaticism is a robust ignorance*, which always judges, and has judged every thing.

Between these extremes there is a middle term—that of forming an opinion after weighing and examining the reasons which ought to determine it—holding the judgment in suspence while there is not a sufficient motive for fixing it, and proportioning our belief to the degree of proof and evidence with which each fact is accompanied. This is called *Scepticism*, adopting the real sense of the word, which signifies to *examine, to grope around an object with distrust*. If I should now be asked, as I was by one of you in the last Lecture, whether it is my intention to lead you to scepticism, I must answer, that, in presenting to you my reflections,

it is not my design to inculcate a system; but if I did wish to establish any doctrine, it would be that of *doubting*, according to the rules I have already laid down. In doing this, I consider myself as serving at once the united cause of philosophy and liberty; for it is the peculiar character of philosophy to leave to every one the right of judging according to the measure of his sensations and his conviction. I would inculcate a spirit of *investigating doubt*, because all history informs me that *confidence is the doctrine of error or of falsehood*, and the constant arm of despotism. The most celebrated of imposters, and the boldest of tyrants, commenced his book by these words:—*There is no doubt in this book. It leadeth into the right path him who walketh blindly—him who receiveth without inquiry my word, which saveth the simple, and confoundeth the wise**. Thus,

* See the 1st Chapter of the Koran, 1st and succeeding verses.

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by this first proposition, man is at once deprived of the free exercise of his will and his understanding: He is devoted to slavery; but, as a reward for rendering himself a slave, the true believer is made the minister of the prophet; and, receiving from Mahomet the Sabre and the Koran, he becomes a prophet in his turn, and says, "There is no doubt in this book: *Believe in it,*" that is to say, *think as I do; or die!* A convenient doctrine, it must be confessed, since it dispenses with all labour and study. It has likewise this advantage, that while the sceptic calculates and examines, the fanatical believer acts and executes. The first, perceiving several roads at once, stops to examine where they would conduct him. The last, seeing only the path which is immediately before him, pursues it without hesitation: he runs straight forward, like those obstinate animals whose sight is circumscribed by pieces of leather attached to their bridles, in order to prevent them from turning to the right or the left, and, above all, to conceal

conceal from their view the whip which corrects them: But unfortunate is the driver if they become unruly; for, already half-blind, they rush headlessly forward, and at last precipitate him and themselves down the first precipice they meet.

Such, Citizens, is the fate which *presumptuous confidence* prepares for *ignorant credulity*. On the contrary, the advantage resulting from an observing and circumspect system of doubting is such, that, always reserving in the mind room for new proofs, it is constantly disposed to correct a first judgment, and to acknowledge former errors. Thus, if, as it may be expected, I should, either on this or on any other subject, divulge an erroneous opinion, the principles which I profess leave me the resource, or give me the courage, to say, with the ancient philosopher, *I am a man, and nothing that belongs to human nature is foreign to me.*

I invite you, Citizens, to search for and

collect the best observations that have been made on the subject of this Lecture. Unfortunately they are scattered through many volumes, and overwhelmed with a multitude of futile and paradoxical questions. Almost all the authors who have treated of *Historical certainty*, have regarded it with that partiality and prejudice of which I have spoken: they have exaggerated that certainty, because upon it almost all religious systems have had the imprudence to build their dogmas, instead of establishing them on natural facts capable of proof. It is desirable that this subject should be treated in a new and methodical manner: this would be rendering a real service, not only to literature, but to the moral and political sciences.

LECTURE IV.

The preceding subject resumed.—What is the utility that may be derived from History?—That utility divided into three kinds: 1, *The utility of good examples, more than counterbalanced by the bad.* 2, *Transmitting facts relative to the Arts and Sciences.* 3, *Political consequences of the operation of laws, and of the nature of governments, on the fate of nations.—The study of History under this last point of view belongs properly to but a small number of persons: It is only suited to youth, and to the greater part of the various classes of society under the first.—Well written Novels are preferable.*

HITHERTO our attention has been confined to the consideration of the nature of historical certainty. Our researches on this subject may be recapitulated in the following propositions;

1. That

1. That historical facts, that is to say, related facts, reaching us only through the medium of the senses of others, cannot possess that degree of evidence, nor procure in us that conviction, which we obtain from our own senses.

2. That though, as it really happens, our own senses should deceive us, and though their testimony frequently requires examination, it would be absurd, and injurious to our liberty and to our right of opinion, to attribute greater authority to the sensations of others than to our own.

3. That, consequently, historical facts never can attain the two first degrees of certainty, which are those arising from physical sensation, and the recollection of that sensation; that they reach only to the third degree, which is that of analogy, or the comparison of the sensations of others with our own; and that their certainty divides into different classes, according to the greater or less likelihood of the facts, according to the distance of time and place between the occurrences

and

and the narrator, and according to the passage they have made from one reporter to another. Mathematicians having succeeded in submitting all those conditions to precise rules, and forming therefrom a particular branch of knowledge called *the calculation of probabilities*, to that science I refer you to complete your ideas on the question of historical certainty.

We come now to the question of utility; and following the method pointed out in the program, we shall consider what social and practical usefulness may be expected either from the studying or the teaching of history. I am sensible that this manner of treating the question is not the most methodical, since it supposes the principal fact already established and proved; but it will be found the most economical in point of time, and consequently the most useful, since it will greatly abridge the discussion. If I succeed in specifying the kind of utility which may be derived from history, I shall have

have proved its existence; but were I to question that utility, it would be necessary, in the first place, to state the distinction between history such as we now find it, and such as it might be treated: Next the distinction between the works of different historians; and perhaps I should have been embarrassed to prove that any utility resulted from some of those which have received the highest reputation, and possess the greatest influence; but I should thereby have had an opportunity of starting a question sufficiently interesting, viz. *Whether History has not been more injurious than useful? Whether it has not occasioned more evil than good, both to nations and individuals,* by the false ideas, the erroneous notions, and the prejudices of every kind which it has transmitted and consecrated? This thesis would have had the advantage over ours, of taking possession of our own facts, to prove that *utility* never was either the end or the primitive object of history; that the first motive of the rude traditions from

which

which it has sprung, was that mechanical desire, on the part of the narrators, which all men feel for describing their sensations, for expressing them as an instrument utters its sounds, and for recalling the image when the reality is absent or lost—a desire which is the peculiar passion of that age which has ceased to experience other enjoyments, and the foundation of all conversation among men who are unaccustomed to think; that, on the other hand, on the part of the auditors, the motive was curiosity, a second and not less natural desire, which we feel for multiplying our sensations, and for supplying the want of realities by images—a desire which converts every narration into a spectacle, or, if I may use the expression, into a *magic lantern*, the picture of which affords pleasure to the most rational of men, as well as to children.

This thesis would remind us that the first essays in history, composed without art and without taste, have been collected without

without discernment and without any object; that history was at first only a confused mass of incoherent and marvellous reports calculated to excite the attention of rude minds; that it was not until they had been fixed by writing, and become numerous, that facts more precise and more natural produced reflections and comparisons, the results of which were applicable to similar situations; that finally, it is only in modern times, and almost exclusively within a century, that history has assumed that philosophic character which searches, in the series of events, for a genealogical order of causes and effects, to deduce therefrom a theory of regulations and principles calculated to direct individuals and nations towards the object of their preservation or their improvement.

But, in proceeding to similar questions, I should have dreaded giving too much occasion to regard History under the relation of its inconveniences and faults. A criticism over

over profound may sometimes be mistaken for satire; and as instruction possesses a character so sacred that it ought not to admit the sports of paradox, I have avoided every appearance of that kind, and have thought it right to confine myself to the consideration of an utility already existing, or at least one which possibly may be found.

In studying History with the intention and desire of deriving a practical advantage from it, there appear to me three kinds of utility which deserve to be separately considered:—

The first is applicable to individuals, and may be called *moral utility*.

The second belongs to the arts and sciences, and it I denominate *scientific utility*.

The third, which applies to nations and their governments, I name *political utility*.

Indeed, if we analize the facts of which History is composed, it will be found that they

they naturally resolve themselves into three classes: One, private occurrences, or the transactions of individuals; another, public occurrences, or the social order of government; and the third, facts connected with occurrences in the arts and sciences, or operations of the mind.

With regard to the first class, every one may have observed, that, in perusing historical works, either on account of the pleasure which the constant variety of their pictures afford, or the knowledge which may be gleaned from the experience of former times, it uniformly happens that we make a self application of the individual actions we find recounted; that we, in a manner, identify ourselves with the personages of the story; and that we exercise our judgment, or our sensibility, on every thing that occurs to them, deducing therefrom consequences which influence our own conduct. Thus, in perusing the histories of ancient Greece and Italy, every reader attaches a particular interest

to certain characters; follows with attention the private or public life of Aristides or Themistocles, Socrates or Alcibiades, Scipio or Catiline, Cicero or Cæsar; and, from a comparison of their conduct and their destiny, forms reflections and precepts which influence his own actions. This kind of influence, or, if I may so call it, *tutorship* of History, chiefly exists in the biographical part, or descriptions of the lives of men whether public or private, in the manner of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos. But it must be confessed that this kind of History is liable to more than one objection. In the first place, it may be accused of frequently approaching to the nature of romance; for it is obvious that nothing is more difficult than to prove with certainty, and retrace with truth, the actions and character of any man whatever. To accomplish that object, it is necessary to have known him intimately, to have followed and habitually studied him; and, in every connection of life, we know how difficult it is to avoid

those

those passions of friendship or hatred which are obstacles to impartiality. Biographical works are almost always panegyrics or satires. This assertion is sufficiently proved and supported by memoirs published in our own times, with respect to several points, of which we may be able to speak as well informed witnesses.

In general, individual histories cannot be expected to possess accuracy and truth, unless when a man is the writer of his own life, and composes it with a conscientious fidelity; but if we consider what circumstances and qualities are necessary for this task, we will acknowledge that it is difficult, and almost impossible, to find them united in one person. If the writer be a vicious and immoral man, how can he be expected to publish his own shame? and what motive can we have for believing that he possesses the probity which this act requires? If he be a virtuous man, why expose himself to the charges of pride and falsehood, with which vice and envy will

not

not fail to accuse him? If he be distinguished by vulgar foibles, can he be expected to possess the courage necessary to reveal them?

In examining, then, all the motives which men may have for publishing their lives, it appears that they may be reduced either to a wounded self-love, which defends physical or moral existence against the attacks of malevolence and calumny, and this is the most legitimate and rational of motives—or to an ambitious self-love, which wishes to manifest the titles it possesses to glory and consideration, or by which it believes itself worthy of them. Such is the influence of this vanity, that, assuming every form, it conceals itself even under those acts of religious and cenobitical humility, according to which the confession of past errors is the indirect and tacit eulogium of present wisdom; and the effort which that confession is supposed to require, becomes the necessary and interested means of obtaining

pardon,

pardon, favour, or reward. Of this the case of the Bishop Augustin is a striking and appropriate illustration.

It was indeed reserved for our age to exhibit another example in which self-love is immolated solely to the pride *of executing an enterprize which never had a model; of displaying to his contemporaries a man who resembles none of them, and who, having no parallel in his kind, calls himself however the man of nature**; as if fate had decreed that a life passed in paradoxes should terminate by obtaining admiration and almost worship†, on account of having

* See beginning of the Confessions of J. J. Rousseau. There is, perhaps, no book in which as much pride has been collected in so few lines as in the first ten of that work.

† There is this characteristic difference between Rousseau and Voltaire, considered as *chieftains of opinions*, that if you attack Voltaire before his partizans, they defend him by reasoning or pleasantry, but without passion, and at most only regard you as a person of bad

ing exhibited a continued series of illusions of the fancy, and errors of the heart.

This bad taste: But if you attack Rousseau before his disciples, you excite in them a religious horror, and they regard you as a monster. In my youth I experienced those impressions myself; and having sought to discover the cause, it appeared to me, that Voltaire, addressing himself to the imagination rather than to the heart, to the judgment rather than to the feelings, does not heat the mind with any passion; and as he employed himself more in combating the opinions of others than in establishing his own, he produced the habit of doubting rather than that of affirmation,—a disposition of mind which always leads to tolerance. Rousseau, on the contrary, speaks to the heart more than to the head, to the affections rather than to the understanding. He exalts the love of virtue and of truth (without defining either) by the love of women, which is so capable of causing illusion. Having a strong conviction of his own rectitude, he suspected first the opinions, and then the intentions of others: this state of mind is the immediate cause of aversion in the feeble, and persecuting intolerance in the powerful. It is indeed worthy of remark, that the greater number of men who have, in our times, figured in the latter character, were, or pretend to be, the disciples and admirers of J. J. Rousseau.

This leads us to a second consideration of the subject, which is, that, in admitting the veracity of biography of this kind, it is possible that history would on that very account be rendered inferior in utility to novels. This must happen when the real adventures present the immoral spectacle of virtue more unfortunate than vice; for, in fictitious adventures, we only esteem the art which exhibits vice more removed from happiness than virtue. If, then, there exist a book in which a man, regarded as virtuous, and almost elevated into the patron of a sect, should decribe himself as the most unfortunate of beings; if that man, *confessing* the transactions of his life, stated a multitude of instances of his meanness, infidelity and ingratitude—if the idea he gives of his temper be fretful, suspicious and envious—if, not content with revealing the faults which belonged to himself, he *discloses those of others which belonged not to him*—if this man was besides endowed with great talents as an orator and an author, and had

acquired

acquired an authority as a philosopher—be if he used those advantages only to panegyrize ignorance, detract from the social state, and to bring men back to their original savage condition—if the doctrine of Omar, revived under the mask of his name, and his principles serve to inculcate the inutility of the arts and the sciences, to proscribe all talents, all wealth, and, consequently, all the industry which the acquisition of property creates, perhaps it would be difficult to find a single corner of utility in this *too real* history.

It will perhaps be agreed, that the information thus obtained is purchased at too high a price, and that in an individual organized in a certain manner, excessive sensibility may degenerate into mental alienation*. It is doubtless to be regretted,

* It is well known that Rousseau died in this state, so plainly indicated by his last writings—To determine with precision the point at which that aberration of the

ed, that the author of Emilius, who has spoken so much of nature, should not have imitated that wisdom by which she exhibits externally all the forms that flatter our senses, while she covers with a thick veil every thing that threatens to shock our delicacy. From what has been said, I conclude, that the moral utility which may be derived from history is not spontaneous, but the result of an art guided by rules and founded on principles of which we shall treat when we shall have occasion to notice the primary schools.

The *second* kind of utility relates to the arts and sciences. Its sphere is more varied, more extensive, and involves fewer inconveniences than that of which we have just spoken. History, regarded under this point of view, is a fruitful mine, in exploring

understanding called *folly* commences, is a very difficult problem, which requires the united powers of medicine and philosophy for its solution.

exploring which every individual may extract materials suited to the science or art to which he is devoted, or which he is desirous of cultivating. Researches of this kind possess the inestimable advantage of always throwing a real light on the subject under discussion, either by confronting the different processes or methods adopted at different periods among different people; by the exhibition of errors formerly committed, and the comparison of experiments which it is always possible to repeat; or, finally, by the knowledge alone of the track which the human mind has followed in the invention and progress of the art or science to which you direct your attention;—a track which indicates by analogy that which ought to be followed in advancing towards perfection.

To such researches as these we are indebted for numerous discoveries, some of which are original, others only revived, but for which their authors always merit our thanks: by their means, medicine has

procured for us methods and remedies; surgery, instruments; mechanics, tools and machines; architecture, decorations and utensils.

The *third* kind of utility which History affords, is what I call political or social utility. It consists in collecting and meditating on all the facts which relate to the formation of societies and the mechanism of governments, with the view of obtaining general or particular results, calculated to serve as terms of comparison in analogous or similar cases. In this light, History, considered universally, is a vast collection of moral and social experiments which mankind make involuntarily and very expensively on themselves, and in which every people, by exhibiting varied combinations of events, passions, causes and effects, unfolds to the attentive observer all the springs and mechanism of human nature. Indeed, were it possible to obtain a correct view of the reciprocal operation of all the parts of each social

social machine, that is to say, of the habits, manners, opinions, laws, internal and external regimen of each nation, it would be possible to establish a general theory of the art of composing those moral machines, and of laying down fixed and determined principles of legislation, political economy, and government. It is not necessary to point out all the advantages of such a labour. Unfortunately it is liable to too many difficulties in the execution: first, because the greater number of histories, particularly the ancient, afford only imperfect or vicious materials; next, because the application made of those materials, and the reasoning founded upon them, can only be right in proportion as the occurrences are correctly represented.

We all know how difficult it is to obtain true and precise details of private and preliminary transactions; and, in history, it is not the great and striking events that are instructive, but the accessary facts or the circumstances that have prepared

or produced them. This is evident, because it is only by a knowledge of the preparatory circumstances that we can be enabled to avoid or to obtain similar results. It is not from the issue of a battle that we receive instruction, but from the different movements that lead to its decision, which, though less splendid, are however the causes, while the event is only the effect*. Such is the importance of those details, that, without them, the term of comparison is vicious, and has no analogy with the object to which we would apply it. This error, so serious in its consequences, is however habitual, and almost general, in History: facts are admitted, without discussion; combinations invented,

* The details of negociations on which the great events of peace and war depend, are all very instructive historical facts, as they disclose the secret movements of passion and intrigue; but those facts will always be little known, because the honour or the interest of the agents seldom permits them to render a faithful account of their transactions.

invented, where no proper relation exists; hypotheses that have no foundation formed, and unjust applications made. Hence those errors of administration and government, falsely imitative, which sometimes lead to the greatest misfortunes.

In this point of view the study of History is a very profound art; and if the utility which results from it be of the most important kind, the art which procures it must be considered as the most elevated. It is indeed the most transcendant part, and may be called the *high mathematics* of History.

These various considerations, instead of being digressions from my subject, facilitate the solution of the greater part of the questions connected with it. If it be asked whether History ought to form a part of the instruction of the primary schools? It is very obvious that this study is not suited to them, because those schools are composed of youths whose

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understandings are not yet unfolded, and who are incapable of judging of the occurrences of the social state. It is equally evident, that this kind of knowledge is only calculated to give them false and erroneous ideas, to inspire them with prejudices, and to make them idle prattlers, as the vicious system of education has, during two centuries, sufficiently proved in every corner of Europe. What can we learn, in our infancy, from the Histories of Livy and Sallust, the Commentaries of Cæsar, or the Annals of Tacitus, which are so prematurely put into our hands? What advantage, what instruction have we derived from them? The most skilful instructors of youth were so well convinced of the errors of this practice, that, notwithstanding their desire to introduce the reading of the Hebrew books into their system of education, they durst not venture to make the attempt, but gave them the form of a romance, under the title of the *History of the People of God.* Besides, as the greater part of the pupils of

the primary schools may be expected to devote themselves to arts and professions, the practice of which must absorb the whole of their time, it is absurd to direct their attention to a science which they never can have an opportunity of cultivating, which indeed it will be necessary for them to forget, and which would only inspire them with that false pretension to knowledge which is always worse than ignorance. Primary schools, then, ought to reject the study of History under its great political relation. They should admit it, however, with respect to the arts, because there are several which are adapted to the understanding of youth, and the picture of their origin and progress may inspire the desire of analyzing them: but it would be necessary to compose books on purpose for this kind of study, and it is probable that the advantage thus obtained would not be worthy the trouble and the expence of such an undertaking.

The only kind of history that appears

to me suited to youth is the *biographic*, or that of the lives of public and private men. Experience has proved, that reading of that kind practised in the midst of families produces a powerful effect on young minds. It inspires them with that desire of imitation which is a physical attribute of our nature, and determines most of our actions. The impressions received from such readings often decide the business and inclinations of a whole life. These impressions acquire more force in consequence of their not being prepared by art; for the pupil, in making a reflection and forming a judgment, possesses a feeling of liberty, and believes himself neither governed nor influenced by a superior authority. Our ancestors were well convinced of the power of such impressions, when, to give currency to their dogmatic opinions, they formed the work which they called the *Lives of the Saints*. It must not be imagined that compositions of that kind exhibit no merit or talents: on the contrary, many of them are written

ten with much art, and a profound knowledge of the human heart. This is sufficiently proved by their frequently fulfilling their object—that of imprinting a movement on the mind in the manner and direction intended.

In proportion as men's minds have been disengaged from religious ideas, they have proceeded to works of a philosophic and political kind; and the Illustrious Men of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos have obtained a preference over the *Martyrs* and *Holy Fathers of the Desert*. Those models, it cannot be denied, are better fitted for the use of men in society: but they have still the inconvenience of removing us too far from the manners of our own times, and giving rise to vicious comparisons, capable of leading us into very serious errors. Models of biography should be drawn from amongst ourselves, and from the present times; and if they do not exist, they ought to be created. Here the principle I have advanced, of the utility

lity of novels being superior to that of history, more particularly applies. It is desirable, that the government should encourage elementary books of this kind; but as they belong more to morals than to history, I shall only call to the recollection of their authors two fundamental principles of the art, from which they never should deviate—*brevity* and *clearness*. An overflow of words fatigues the minds of youth, and renders them empty declaimers. Concise tracts, on the contrary, interest them, and render them thinkers. They will always profit less by reflections made for them, than by those which they make themselves.

LECTURE V.

Of the Art of studying History with Advantage.—That Art not attainable by Youth.—The Study of History without proper Instruction more injurious than useful to young Minds.—Of the Art of teaching the Study of History.—Views of the Author on a course of historical Studies.—Of the Art of writing History.—Examination of the Principles of Lucian and Mably.

HISTORICAL facts, as we have already observed, yield the materials of three kinds of utility. The first, relative to individuals; the second, relative to governments and societies; and the third, applicable to the arts and sciences: but, as neither of those utilities are to be found at first sight, nor unattended with inconvenience and difficulty, and as a peculiar art, joined to much precaution, is requisite

to collect them, we have commenced the examination of the rules of that art, and shall now continue to develope them by dividing them into two branches, 1. the art of studying history; 2. the art of writing history.

I have already stated, that the study of history is in no point of view suited to early youth. The facts of which it is composed require a fund of experience and a maturity of judgment incompatible with that age. Obliged to believe on the authority of others, the young may contract errors and prejudices, the influence of which will last through life. The true object of instruction is not to know much, but to know well; and half-learning is a false knowledge a hundred times more dangerous than ignorance. The only instruction youth can derive from history is of a moral kind, and consists in collecting maxims for their conduct in life; and, as precepts drawn from fact and example are most impressive, that part of history, selected

lected for their use, ought to be anecdotes and accounts of virtuous actions. These, however, ought to be employed with discretion, for too great an abundance cannot be easily digested. I may observe here, that the wish of saying and doing too much is a great error in French education. We teach youth to speak, when we ought to instruct them how to think; words dissipate thought, meditation accumulates it. The prattle of the giddy and the frivolous engenders discord; but silence, the child of wisdom, is the friend of peace. The eloquent Athenians were only a nation of squabblers, but the silent Spartans were a wise and dignified people. The Ancients honoured Pythagoras with the title of *The Wise*, doubtless because he had elevated silence into a virtue.

In the progress of education the minds of youth are more enlarged, and become more capable of receiving that instruction which history affords. If, however, we call to our recollection the impressions of

our

our early years, we must acknowledge that the kind of reading which interested us most was, for a long period, accounts of battles and military anecdotes. In perusing the ancient history of Rollin, or the history of France by Velli, we may recollect that we were accustomed to glide rapidly or linger carelessly over the parts relating to manners, laws, and politics, until we arrived at descriptions of sieges, engagements, or private adventures; but even in adventures and personal histories it is usual to prefer those of great warriors to the biography of legislators and philosophers.

These considerations lead to two reflections: one, that it is long before the study of history can be rendered useful to youth, with whom it has few points of contact; the other, that, as it touches them chiefly on the moral side, and more particularly on that of the passions, it is dangerous to allow them to apply to this study without a guide. We can only put into their hands

hands histories which are prepared or selected for them; but in this case, do we teach them history? Do we not then exhibit facts such as we wish them to see them, rather than as they really are*.

Doubtless this mode of education has its advantages; but it may also be attended with inconveniences. If our ancestors deceived themselves by adopting a moral, which, instead of directing, opposed all the inclinations of nature, it is to be feared that the present age also deceives itself in adopting one which tends to inflame and not to moderate the passions—It is to be feared that in passing from one extreme to another, from a blind credulity to a savage incredulity, from a misanthropical apathy to a devouring cupidity, from a servile

* Is not history, in general, transactions stated in the light in which the writers have viewed them? and in this case, may we not apply to them the words of Fontenelle: *History is the romance of the human mind, and romances are the history of the human heart?*

servile patience to a despotic and unsociable pride, we shall do no more than change one fanaticism for another, and, in abandoning that of the Goths of the ninth century, return to that of the children of Odin, the Franks, and the Celtæ, from whom we are descended. Such must certainly be the effect of that modern doctrine which tends to inflame the passions, and to push courage beyond the object of defence and preservation which nature indicates for its boundary—a doctrine which only inculcates warlike virtues and warlike manners; as if virtue, whose essence is to preserve, could connect itself with the idea of war, whose essence is to destroy—a doctrine which calls a savage hatred to every other nation *patriotism*; as if the exclusive love of our own tribe were not the special virtue of wolves and tigers; as if, in the great society of human kind, there were a different justice and a different virtue for nations and for individuals; as if a warlike and conquering people differed from a turbulent and wicked

ed individual, who takes possession of his neighbour's property because he is the stronger—finally, a doctrine which only tends to lead back Europe to the ferocious manners of the Cimbri and the Teutones.

This doctrine is the more dangerous on account of its powerful influence on the minds of youth, who eagerly adopt its precepts, and become heated with military enthusiasm. Instructors of the nation, weigh well a fact which passes before your eyes! If the present generation, educated in gentle manners, and which, in infancy, knew no other toys than *dolls* and *paper castles*, has, in so short a time, taken a direction to sanguinary manners*, what may be expected from that which is rising up in the midst of rapine and carnage, and

* When I wrote this, in Ventose of the year 3, I had just crossed France from Nice to Paris. During my journey I frequently observed the children hanging cats on lamp posts, and guillotining poultry, in imitation of the revolutionary tribunals.

and which makes the horrors we invent the sports of its youth?

One step farther and there may be revived among us the extravagant effects of the phrensy which the doctrine of Odin formerly produced in Europe; a phrensy of which the Danish school, established by the governor of Jomsburgh in the tenth century, presents an example worthy of being cited. I take it from one of the best works of the present age, the History of Danemark, by Professor Mallet. Having in his introduction, lib. 4. described the passion which the Scandinavians, in common with the Celtæ, entertained for war, and traced its cause in their laws, their education, and in their religion, he relates the following story:—

"History informs us that Harold, king of Danemark, who reigned about the middle of the tenth century, founded a town on the coast of Pomerania, called Julin or Jomsburgh. Here he formed a colony of young

young Danes, and appointed a person named Palnatocko governor. This new Lycurgus made another Lacedæmon of his settlement. The education of youth was solely directed to the object of making them soldiers. The colonists were prohibited from mentioning the word fear, even in the most imminent dangers. No inhabitant of Julin was allowed to yield to numbers. He was taught to fight intrepidly, without flying, however superior his enemy might be. The certainty of instant death only served to stimulate him to the combat. It appears that this legislator had succeeded in effacing from the breasts of the greater number of his disciples every sentiment of that passion, so powerful and so natural, which makes us dread our dissolution. Nothing can be a more convincing proof of this than the following story, which deserves to be related here on account of its singularity.

" Some Jomsburghers, who made an irruption into the territory of Hacco, a Nor-

Norwegian chieftain, were vanquished, notwithstanding the obstinacy of their resistance. A number of the most distinguished of the party having been made prisoners, were, agreeably to the custom of the times, condemned to death. This sentence, instead of affecting them, inspired them with joy. The first contented himself with saying, without changing his countenance or testifying the least mark of alarm—*Why should not the same thing happen to me that happened to my father? he died, and I must die also.*

"A soldier, named Torchil, who cut off their heads, having asked the second what he thought of his fate, he replied, that he knew the laws of Julin too well to pronounce any word that indicated fear.

"To the same question the third replied, that he rejoiced in his fate, and that he preferred a glorious death to a life of infamy like that of his executioner.

"The fourth returned a longer, a more remarkable answer—'I suffer willingly,' said he, 'and this moment affords me the greatest satisfaction. I only beg that my head may be cut off as quickly as possible. It has frequently been disputed at Julin, whether we retain any of our senses after decapitation; I shall therefore hold this knife in one hand, and if after I am beheaded I lift it up against you, that will prove I am not entirely deprived of understanding; if I let it fall, that will be a proof of the contrary. Hasten, then, and decide the question.' Torchil cut the head off at one blow, and the knife fell to the ground.

"The fifth displayed the same tranquillity, and died smiling at his enemies.

"The sixth advised Torchill to strike him in the front;—'I shall extend myself motionless,' said he, 'and you may observe that I shall not even close my eyes. In Jomsburgh it is common not to shrink when we receive the stroke of death. We

 prepare

prepare ourselves for it by an exercise.' He died, and all the spectators witnessed that he kept his promise.

"The seventh, the historian tells us, was a man of singular beauty, and in the flower of his age; his long fair hair resembled silk, and floated in ringlets on his shoulders. Torchil having asked him whether he feared death:—'I meet it willingly,' said he, 'since in doing so I fulfil the great duty of life, and since I have seen those die whom I cannot survive. I only beg of you to take care that no slave may touch my hair, and that my blood may not stain it."

This story is a good example of the influence of education on human conduct. It at the same time shews the abuse which may be made of history, which constantly exhibits scenes of folly, vice, and crimes, and, consequently, serves as the model and the apology of the most flagrant deviations from justice and rectitude.

In

In vain will it be said, that the evils which result from such systems are sufficient to teach mankind to avoid them. There is a profound truth in morals to which a sufficient attention is not paid; which is, that *the picture of disorder and vice always leaves dangerous impressions, and that it serves less to dissuade us from evil, than to familiarize us with it, and to harden us in its practice by the excuse which the example furnishes.* This arises from the same physical mechanism by which *an obscene story disturbs the chastest mind*, and which proves to us, that the best means of preserving virtue is to withhold from it the images of vice.

The wisest conduct with regard to youth, is not to direct their attention to the study of history until they are capable of judging, in some degree, for themselves. They would then be more able to derive advantage from it, and their minds would not bend before the prejudices which an ordinary education inspires.

Were I to trace a plan for studies of this kind, after requiring these conditions, the following appears to me the mode best calculated for carrying it into execution.

In the first place, I would require that my pupils should possess a preliminary knowledge of the demonstrative sciences, such as mathematics, natural philosophy, astronomy, &c. that is to say, that they may have their minds stored with the means and the terms of comparisons, to enable them to judge of the facts they find stated in history. I have mentioned astronomy, because without some idea of that science we can know but little of geography, and if destitute of geographical knowledge we know not where to place the scenes of history, which float in the mind like clouds in the air. I do not consider it necessary that my pupils should study the details of these sciences deeply. I would not even expect them to be entirely free from moral and religious prejudices. It will be sufficient if they are not too strongly

strongly prepossessed in their opinions, and that their minds are open to conviction. With this disposition I have no doubt that the varied spectacle of historical contradictions will rectify their ideas, by extending them. He who has limited his acquaintance to the narrow circle of his own relations or party is obstinate; he who knows no creed but that of his own church, is intolerant; for obstinacy and intolerance are always the fruits of a selfish ignorance: but when we mix with the world, when we have compared a number of opinions, we perceive that every man has his value, and every opinion its reasons. Thus we are taught to smooth the sharp angles of vanity, that we may roll gently along with the torrent of society. This fruit of experience, which may be so well gathered in travels, history also affords; for history is an agreeable journey, in which, without dangers or fatigue, we may travel through the universe of time and place.

But the traveller would not take a station in a balloon in an unknown and inaccessible country, to proceed thence to the habitable parts of the earth; neither would I wish my pupils in history to plunge at once into the night of antiquity, with the view of turning rapidly to the ages contiguous to our own, which have no resemblance to the former. They will therefore avoid all those histories, which, at a single bound, transport us to the origin of the world, calculate its epoch as if it were an affair of yesterday, and declare, that this is a subject on which reason is not to be employed, and which must be believed without any proof.

As reason, however, is a loadstone which we ought not to abandon, let us leave those inhabitants of the antipodes in their own region, and, like prudent navigators, take our departure from a known point, sail from shore to shore, and advance only as we become acquainted with the coast we would explore. We ought first to study

study the history of the country in which we were born, or in which we are destined to live, and where we can obtain the best evidence respecting the facts we wish to investigate, and examine the objects we wish to compare. I would not, however, entirely condemn a method which should commence with the history of a foreign country. The aspect of an order of things, customs, and manners, different from that with which we are accustomed, has a powerful effect in interrupting the current of our prejudices. It teaches us to view ourselves in a new light, which produces in us disinterestedness and impartiality. But there is one condition I hold to be indispensable, which is, that it must be the history of a country and times that are well known, and the events of which are capable, in a certain degree, of being verified. Let it be the history of Spain, England, Turkey, or Persia, it is equally the same; with this difference, that our best histories have hitherto been those of countries in Europe, because with those

countries we are best acquainted. Let the student, in the first place, acquire a general idea of a given country and a given nation, in the most esteemed author. He will thus gain a step in the scale of historical knowledge, with which every step of his future progress should be connected. If he wish to follow the details, he will find the originals pointed out in the first work, and may consult and compare them. He ought to refer to those original sources of information on points with respect to which the author he has read testifies embarrassment or uncertainty. From a first known nation or period, let him pass to the next most interesting and most closely connected with the points necessary to be elucidated in the former history. Thus he will gradually acquire a sufficient knowledge of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the New World. According to my principle, of always proceeding from the known to the unknown, and from the near to the remote, I would not have him travel into distant times until he has obtained a complete

plete idea of the present. This idea once acquired, he may embark for antiquity, but with caution, advancing step by step, lest he should lose himself on a sea without shores, and where not a star is to be seen to direct his course.

Arrived thus at the farther confines of historical times, we find some ascertained epochs; we fix upon them as promontories, from which we endeavour to discover, in the gloomy ocean of antiquity, a few of those prominent points which rise like islands above the waves of events. Without leaving land, we ascertain by different calculations, as by triangles, the distance of some points, which become a chronological base, that serves to measure the distance of others. While we can see these known points, and can measure the intervals between them, we advance with the clue in our hands; but when we see nothing except mists and clouds, and when the framers of cosmogonies and mythologies step forward and offer to conduct us

to the land of prodigies and fairies, it is time we should trace back our steps; for those guides usually require this condition, that they shall put a bandage over our eyes, and then there is no knowing where one goes: besides, they usually dispute among themselves who shall have the honour of leading their disciple; and it is paying too dear for a little science to purchase it at the price of peace.

Impressed with these considerations, my pupils would return from the chronology of the Assyrians and Egyptians with their minds full of doubts. They would not pretend to know within an hundred years, at least, the period of the siege of Troy, and would be very much inclined to doubt the pretended human existence of all the demi-gods, as well as the deluge of Deucalion, the ship of the Argonautes, the one hundred and fifteen years of the reign of the Chinese Fohi, and all the Indian, Chaldean, or Arabian prodigies, which bear more resemblance to the tales

of the thousand and one nights than to history: but to console them, they will have acquired sound ideas respecting a period of above three thousand years, which is all that we know of real history; and by comparing their notes, and all the extracts they may have carefully made in the course of their studies, they will have acquired the means of deriving from history all the utility it is capable of affording.

I am sensible I may be told, that such a plan of study requires years for its execution, and that it would absorb all the time and faculties of any individual; that, therefore, it is only suited to a very small number of men, who, either by their personal means, or by those furnished to them by society, are enabled to devote to it the whole of their time and attention. I admit the truth of this observation, and I agree to it the more readily as it is the natural consequence of what I have stated. Indeed, the more I reflect on the

nature of history, the more I am convinced that it ought not to be made the subject of general study, and diffused through all classes of society. All citizens ought to be instructed in the arts of reading, writing, arithmetic, and design: I can conceive why they ought likewise to be taught mathematics, which calculate the properties of bodies—geometry, which measures them—experimental philosophy, which renders their qualities obvious—elementary medicine, which teaches us to regulate our own machine, and to preserve our health—geography, which makes us acquainted with the point of the universe on which we are placed, or in which we must exist. All these kinds of instruction are rendered necessary by the ordinary and practical events, common to every period of life and every condition in society. The utility of those studies is incontestible, because the subjects of them are constantly present to man, and constantly acting upon him. He cannot withdraw himself from their laws by his will, nor

elude their power by reasoning or sophism. The fact is present. It is under his finger. He touches it, and its existence cannot be disputed. But in history, in that fantastic picture of vanished events, the shadows of which only remain, what is the necessity of studying those fleeting forms which have perished, and which never will live again? Of what importance is it to the labourer or the artizan, the tradesman or the merchant, that there has existed an Alexander, an Attila, a Tamerlane, an empire of Assyria, a kingdom of Bactriana, a Republic of Carthage, of Sparta, or of Rome? Will it add to his knowledge any thing necessary for his conduct, or useful for his happiness? Would he be less comfortable or less happy though he knew not that there had existed great philosophers, or even great legislators, called Pythagoras, Socrates, Zoroaster, Confucius, Mahomet? The men are gone, their maxims remain; but it is the maxims which are of importance to us, and on them we ought to form our

opinion,

opinion, without regarding the mould which produced them, and which nature herself has, doubtless for our instruction, broken. She has not however destroyed the models; and if the maxims interest, they may be confronted with natural facts. Their similarity or discordance will decide the question of error or truth.

I must repeat that I cannot conceive the necessity of studying to acquire a knowledge of facts which no longer exist, and I perceive much inconvenience in making that study an universal and ordinary occupation. One obvious inconvenience is, the employing so much time and wasting so much attention which might be much better applied to the useful sciences. The difficulty of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of historical statements is another inconvenience, which affords an inlet to all the chicanery of argumentation. By this habit men are led to substitute for the palpable demonstration of the senses, the vague sentiments of private

private opinion and persuasion. Such are always the reasons of those who never reason at all, and which, being applied to error as well as truth, are only the expression of that self-love which is liable to exasperation on the smallest contradiction, and to engender the spirit of party, enthusiasm, and fanaticism.

There is still another inconvenience in history, which is, that it is only useful in results, the elements of which are so complicated, so uncertain, and so much calculated to mislead, that there can never be an absolute confidence or certainty of avoiding error. I persist, therefore, in regarding history, not as a science, because, in my opinion, that title is only applicable to the demonstrative branches of knowledge, such as mathematics, mechanics, geography, &c. but as a systematic art of calculating probabilities. In this it resembles the art of medicine; for though the elements which compose the human body have fixed properties, and

their

their combinations a determined and uniform operation, yet, as these combinations are numerous and variable, and as they are only known by their effects, the art of healing is involved in a state of doubt and conjecture, which constitutes its difficulty, and places it above the sphere of ordinary acquirements. It is the same with respect to history. Though it be certain that particular occurrences have produced particular events or consequences, yet, as the positive state of these facts, as their relations and re-actions are not determined or known, there always exists the possibility of error. This renders their application and comparison to other occurrences a delicate operation, which requires minds much exercised in that kind of study, and endowed with great acuteness of penetration. It is true, that under this last consideration I particularly allude to the political utility of history, and I confess that, in my opinion, that utility is its proper and only object. Private morals, the improvement

ment of the arts and sciences, appear to me only accessary utilities. The principal object, the fundamental art, is the application of history to government, to legislation, and to all the political economy of societies. I would therefore willingly denominate history the *physiological science of government*, since by a comparison of the past it teaches us to know the present and future state of political bodies, the symptoms of their disorders, the indications of their health, the diagnostics of their agitations and of their crises, and, finally, the remedies which, in such cases, may be applied.

It was, doubtless, from a conviction of the difficulties we have described, that the study of history was, among the ancients, confined to men who were destined for public employments. Indeed, the best historians of antiquity, as well as of modern times, have been what are called statesmen; and in China, an empire famed for many wise institutions, a special college

lege of historians has existed for ages. The Chinese have not unreasonably supposed, that the business of collecting and transmitting the facts which constitute the life of a government and a nation, ought not to be abandoned to hazard nor to the caprice of individuals. It has appeared to them, that the composition of history would form a *magistracy* which might exercise the most powerful influence on the conduct of nations and governments. They have, therefore, been desirous that men, selected for their knowledge and their virtues, should be charged with the task of collecting the events of each reign, and that, without communicating with each other, they should deposit their notes or memorandums into sealed boxes, which are not opened until the death of the prince or the expiration of his dynasty. I shall not here investigate the advantages of this institution. It is sufficient for me to indicate its correspondence with the elevated idea I have formed of

of history. I come now to the art of historical composition.

Two distinguished authors have written on the subject of historical composition. The first is Lucian, born at Samosata, in the reign of Trajan, whose treatise is divided into criticism and precept. In the first part he ridicules, with that lively wit which is peculiar to himself, the bad taste of a multitude of historians, to whom the war of Marcus Aurelius against the Parthians gave birth, and who perished, as he says, like a swarm of butterflies after a storm. Among the faults with which he reproaches them, he particularly notices their amplification of style, affectation of learned words, and superfluity of epithets, as well as, by a natural consequence of so corrupt a taste, falling into the opposite extremes of trivial expression, low and disgusting details, intermixed with daring falsehoods and base flattery. In short, the epidemical corruption with which the Roman writers of the second century were

were attacked, was distinguished by the same symptoms as that of which modern Europe has exhibited numberless examples among every people.

In the second part, Lucian describes the qualities and the duties of a good historian: he would have him endowed with sagacity; capable of thinking justly, and of disclosing his thoughts; experienced in politics and in war; free from fear and ambition, and alike inaccessible to the seductions or the menaces of Power; disposed to declare the truth, without diffidence, and without acrimony; just without severity; prepared to censure, but disdaining to calumniate; and neither influenced by a party nor a national spirit.—In a word, he would have him a citizen of the world, subject to no master, obeying no law, regardless of the opinions of his own times, and looking only for the esteem of the wise and the suffrage of posterity.

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As to the style of history, Lucian recommends that it should be easy, pure, clear, and suited to the subject; habitually simple in narrative, but becoming noble, dignified, and almost poetic, according to the scenes it pourtrays; seldom oratorical, and never declamatory. The reflexions ought to be short, the materials well distributed, and the evidence well scrutinized. In a word, the mind of the historian, as he observes, should be a faithful mirror, reflecting facts without distorting them. If he state a marvellous occurrence, he should simply describe it without affirmation or denial, that he may not be responsible for its truth or falsehood: he ought to have no object but truth, no motive but the desire of being useful, and no recompence in expectation, but the approbation of those who are the best judges of his labours. Such is the substance of the Treatise of Lucian.

The second author is Mably, who has given to his work the form of a dialogue, and

and divided it into two conversations. We are at first somewhat surprised to find three Greeks discussing the insurrection of the Americans against the English. Lucian would have laughed at this incongruity, but the severe Mably did not understand raillery. In the first conversation, he treats of the different kinds of history, and first of universal history and its preliminary study. In the second, he treats of particular histories, of their object, and makes some observations common to all the kinds.

On opening the first conversation, we find that it is necessary to be born a historian. We are astonished to discover such a maxim in a brother of Condillac: but Condillac, gentle and amiable, analized; Mably, rigid and inflexible, judged and decided. He afterwards proposes with more reason, that his disciples should study politics, of which he points out two kinds: One founded on these laws which nature has established for procuring

happiness

happiness to men, that is to say, whatever is really a law of nature. The other, the work of men, or those variable and conventional laws, which are the offspring of passion, of injustice, and of force, and from which there result only factitious good, and much certain evil. The first affords the historian sound ideas of justice, of the relations of men, and of the means of rendering them happy. The second instructs him in the habitual progress of human affairs. He learns to calculate their movements, to foresee their effects, and to avoid their disasters. In those, and some other precepts, Mably is more copious and more instructive than Lucian: But it is to be regretted that the former has neither imitated the order, the perspicuity, nor the gaiety of the latter. The whole of Mably's work breathes a sombre and acrimonious morosity. He respects no modern author: he thinks perfection is only to be found among the ancients whom he passionately admires; but notwithstanding this attachment, he prefers

Grotius

Grotius to Tacitus. Tacitus, he says, has deduced no lesson of utility from the reign of Tiberius. His painting is strong, but his instruction feeble: his manner of describing the conduct of the Romans towards the nations called barbarous, affords just grounds to doubt the soundness of his philosophy. According to Mably, no history claims admiration except that of Titus Livy, a book which just criticism might very properly denominate a romance: of this he was aware, and therefore wished that a number of passages in this favourite author which displeased him should be expunged. He loves those harangues which the characters in history never made. He praises Bossuet for presenting to his readers a great dramatic picture, and he grossly abuses Voltaire for his assertion that history is but a probable romance, only good when it can be rendered useful. It cannot be dissembled, that the diffuse and redundant work of Mably, composed with no attention to style or method, is unworthy of the

author

author of the observations on the History of France. It does not possess that didactic brevity which ought to have been its principal merit, and which indeed Lucian also wants. The one hundred and eighty pages of Mably may be easily reduced to twenty good pages of precepts. The reader would then save eight-ninths of his time, and be relieved from the pain which the author's splenetic satire excites. Let us not, however, accuse him with that as a crime, since it formed his torment: though men are not borne historians, they are perhaps borne good humoured or morose; and unfortunately the culture of letters, a sedentary life, and laborious studies, are calculated to thicken the bile, to produce obstructions, and to disorder the stomach, which is always the source either of gaiety or chagrin. Literary men are condemned when they ought to be pitied. They are reproached for passions, which form perhaps the talents for which they are admired. They have but one fault, that of labouring more for the benefit of others,

themselves. Hitherto they have too much neglected the physical knowledge of their own bodies, of that animated machine by which they live. They have neglected the laws of physiology and regimen, which are the fundamental sciences of the affections. This study would be peculiarly proper to the writers of personal history, and would give to them a kind of utility as new as important. If an observer, at once a moralist and physiologist, studied the relations which exist between the dispositions of his body and the temper of his mind—if he examined with care on what days and at what hours he possessed uncommon activity or languor of thought, bold and animated, or cold and feeble sentiments, he would perceive that those ordinary and periodical phases of the mind correspond with the equally common and periodical phases of the body—with slow or easy digestions—with different kinds of aliments, whether gentle or acrid, stimulating or sedative, of which certain liquors, such as wine and coffee,

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are striking examples—with interrupted or precipitated perspiration.—In a word, he would be convinced that the *movement, well or ill regulated, of the corporeal machine,* is the powerful regulator of the movement of the thinking organ; that, consequently, what is called a vice of the mind or character, is frequently only a defect of the bodily temperament or functions which requires only a good regimen to be corrected. From such a study, well conducted, there would result this utility, that, discovering the cause of many virtues and many vices in our physical habits, we should be furnished with valuable rules of conduct applicable to different temperaments, and we should thus be taught to cherish a spirit of indulgence, which would make us regard men usually called peevish and intolerant, only as diseased or ill-constituted, who, like other valetudinarians, ought to be sent to mineral waters or bathing quarters.

LECTURE VI.

Continuation of the same subject.—Four methods of composing History—1. According to the order of time, as in Annals and Chronicles—2. By adopting a dramatic or systematic arrangement—3. By treating the different subjects separately—4. By an analytic or philosophic arrangement.—Illustration of these different methods.—Superiority of the last—Its connection with politics and legislation.—It admits none but ascertained facts, and is only suitable to modern times.—Facts recorded of ancient times, can never possess a higher evidence than that of probability—Necessity on this account of recomposing ancient History.—Plan of a literary society for collecting ancient documents in every part of Europe.—Prejudices destroyed by disclosing their origin.—Influence of History on the conduct of governments,

ments, and the fate of nations.—Effects of the Jewish writings on Europe.—Effects of the introduction of the Greek and Roman works into education.—Conclusion.

LUCIAN has treated the qualities necessary for a historian, and the style proper for history: Malby has added some observations on the preparatory and auxiliary knowledge which this kind of composition requires; that knowledge he confines almost exclusively to the laws of nations, and personal rights whether natural or factitious and conventional, which formed his favourite and particular study. The subject appears by no means exhausted, and I shall add to the precepts of those authors some hints on the art of collecting and recording historical facts.

It appears to me, that there are four methods of treating history. The first, in which the order of time is followed, I

call the didactic or chronological method. The second, which is founded on the connection or co-relation of facts, I call the dramatic or systematic method. The third is arranged in the order of the different subjects. The fourth consists in an analytic exposition of the whole physical and moral system of a people. This I call the analytic or philosophic method. I shall explain myself farther.

The method in the order of time is a collection and classification of events according to their dates. The style is that of pure and simple narrative, intermixed with few or no reflections. Those who call every thing that is rude and artless *natural*, may give that name to this method; but those who never fail to discover the hand of nature in every production, with the sole difference of more or less skill and combination, will denominate this method the most simple, the least complicated, and requiring the least degree of study and talent in the composition:

position: thus we find that, under the name of Annals and Chronicles, this kind of history has always been the first in every nation. But even in this modest shape it has sometimes risen to a very high degree of merit, when writers, like Tacitus in his Annals, and Thucydides in his Peloponnesian War, have known how to select interesting facts, and to add to the fidelity of the picture all the bold and brilliant colouring that expression can give. On the contrary, when authors without any mark of taste present their readers with a confused mass of facts—when all their labour is reduced to dull insipid narratives of the reigns and deaths of princes, or dry unanimated details of battles, plagues and famines, as is the case with almost all the historians of ancient and modern Asia, as well as those of the middle ages of Europe; then, destitute of interest, and barren in instruction, it must be confessed that this kind of composition deserves all that contempt which is commonly bestowed on books

bearing the title of chronicles. Such compositions are only rude draughts, without any embellishment; and though the materials may be well chosen and complete, they form only the first step towards the other kinds of history.

The second method, which I call dramatic or systematic, consists in rendering all episodes or accessary narrations subservient to the main story, and in connecting and blending all the collateral transactions with the principal event. We have a characteristic example of this method in the History of Herodotus; the basis of which is the War of the Persians and Greeks; and the author has so arranged the incidents, that, commencing with the origin of both nations, he traces the gradual rise of the power of each through all the ramifications that contributed to its formation, as a geographer follows to their sources all the streams that lose themselves in a principal river. By a series of incidents skilfully introduced,

duced, Herodotus makes his readers acquainted with the history of the Lydians, the Medes, the Babylonians subdued by Cyrus; then the Egyptians conquered by Cambyses; next the Scythians attacked by Darius; then the Indians; and in treating their history, he takes a general view of the extremities of the world as known at that time. He returns at last to his leading subject; terminates it with the triumph of the little Greek states over the immense multitudes of Xerxes, when they fought at Salamina and Thermopylæ, This is the capital event which forms the catastrophe of the work. In this method, the author disposes of his materials as he pleases, and his success entirely depends upon his art and talent in connecting, suspending, and combining the principal events of his story, so as to produce an unity or correspondence of all the parts with the whole. I have, therefore, distinguished this method by the term *systematic*: but when the historian confines himself to the developement of one event,

which terminates a series, and is the solution of all that precede it, the gradual increase of interest which is thus excited gives to the work a dramatic character. This is the kind of history which is best adapted to conspiracies, where every thing is explained, and terminated at a final point.

Those different and varied advantages of freedom in the plan, boldness in the execution, beauty in the detail, and interest in the result, have procured for this method the decided preference of the greater number of writers, particularly in modern times. It is, however, to be regretted, that the opportunity which is thus presented for the forming of hypotheses, and the too great exercise of the imagination, renders this kind of history very liable to error. We have brilliant examples of this kind of composition in Vertot's Revolutions of Portugal, Sweden, and Rome, and in an infinite number of other histories far less ably written.

In the third method the materials are classed and arranged in the order of different subjects, each of which is separately treated. It consists in tracing any particular art or science from its origin or from a given period, and considering it singly throughout the whole of its progress. Such is the task which Goguet has proposed to himself in his work intitled "The Origin of Laws, of Arts, and of Sciences." No choice of a subject could be more philosophic, but unfortunately none could have been less philosophically managed. Before recurring to the deluge of Noah for the origin of laws, arts and sciences, and every social institution, it would have been well to have examined whether such a basis did not overthrow the whole edifice of history—whether, by adopting primitive facts contradictory to experience and probability, and inconsistent with the best monuments of antiquity, we do not deprive ourselves of the right of resorting to those rules of experience and probability which constitute the art

of criticising and analysing facts. It ought to be proved, that the book of Genesis is not the compilation of an unknown hand, made after the return of the Jews from their captivity, and in which their national chronicles are interspersed with a cosmogony purely Chaldean, similar to that described by Berosus—a mythology of the same nature as the mythologies of all other nations, in which astronomical facts disguised are taken for political or physical facts, and in which the pretended history of the earth is only the history of the calendar. But were even this negative proved, it would still be ridiculous to assume for a text the Hebrew period from the deluge to Jacob, while it is entirely filled up with facts of Egyptian, Syrian, Chaldean, Greek, Indian, and Chinese origin. Indeed, were those facts well analysed and compared, they would perhaps demonstrate, that the sacred woods, the high places planted with the oaks of Mamre, the human sacrifices, of which Isaac nearly became the victim,

and

and the idols of the women of Jacob, were so many customs of the Druidic and Tartar worship, which at that time extended from the pillars of Hercules to the Seris—a worship, which is precisely the system of Buddism, and ancient and modern Lamism, the seat of which was then at Thibet, among the Bramins, celebrated from all antiquity as the fathers of Asiatic theology. Those antiquities are profoundly elucidated in a work of the kind we are now considering. I allude to the History of ancient Astronomy, by Bailly, whose virtues and talents have received a recompence from the Revolution, which will not be considered as one of the slightest stains of that sanguinary period. I shall likewise mention, as histories arranged according to the order of the subjects, Dr. Henry's History of England, Dr. Robertson's Disquisitions concerning the Trade of India, the History of the Finances of France by Forbonnais, the History of Fatalism by Pluquet, who, with his Dictionary of Heresies, has prepared excellent

excellent materials for another history of the same kind, the History of *Fanaticism*. No subject is more capable of eminently uniting history with philosophy. Fanaticism embraces a part of the theory of the sensations, of the judgment, of the conviction, and of the persuasion common to error and to truth—of that double disposition of the mind, which, sometimes passive and credulous, receives the yoke as a slave, and, sometimes active and zealous, imposes it as a tyrant. Such a history would also afford the opportunity of considering, in all nations, that terrible malady of the mind, which, influenced sometimes by persons, sometimes by opinions, and assuming alternately *religious*, *political*, and *moral* denominations, is still the same both with respect to its nature and its consequences, which are, the fury of civil discord, the carnage of intestine or foreign wars, the dissolution of social order by the spirit of faction, and the overthrow of empires by the delirium of ignorance and presumption.

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The fourth, that is, the analytic or philosophic method, is the same as the last with respect to the management of the subject: but it differs in this, that, instead of treating a single art, science, or passion, &c. it embraces a political body in all its parts. Considering nations as individuals, it follows them through all the duration of their physical and moral existence, with this characteristic circumstance, that it first establishes in their order all the facts relative to that existence, for the purpose of afterwards deducing from their reciprocal action the causes and effects of the rise, the grandeur, and the decline of that kind of moral combination called a political state or government. Thus this kind of history may be regarded as the biography of a nation, and the physiological study of the laws, of the growth and decay of its social body.

I cannot point out any model of this method, because I know no work that has been

been conducted on the plan I have in view. It is a new species, of which I have only formed a complete idea within these few years. Obliged to adopt a method for drawing up my travels in Syria, I was led, as it were by instinct, to describe, in the first place, the physical state of the country, and to indicate all the circumstances of its soil and climate, so different from ours, and without which it would have been impossible to understand a number of its laws and customs. On this basis, as on the ground-work of a picture, is ranged the population, the different kinds of which I had to consider, their origin to trace, their distribution to follow: This distribution conducted me to the political state of the country, considered with respect to the form of the government, the order of administration, the source of the laws, their instruments and means of execution. Arrived at the articles of manners, character, religious and civil opinions, I observed that there existed on the same soil as many contrasts of sect with sect, and

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of race with race, as points of common resemblance between them. The problem became more complicated; and the more I investigated it, the more I was convinced of its extent and profundity. The authority of Montesquieu appeared to resolve it by his general rule of climate, which would constantly associate heat with indolence and servility on one part, and cold with energy and liberty on another. But the authority of Montesquieu was contradicted by a multitude of past facts, and by existing facts, which exhibited to me, under the same sky, and in a space of less than four degrees, three distinct and opposite characters. I therefore resisted the empire of a great name; and I resisted it the more readily in consequence of having already discovered a palpable error in Buffon, with respect to the pretended exhaustation of a soil, in which I observed all the fertility it ever was capable of possessing. With regard to Montesquieu, I was convinced that he had

had only adopted, with alterations, an opinion which some ancient philosophers, and particularly Hippocrates, maintained in a sense much more just and precise. I know the celebrated treatise of that physician on air, soil, and water. I have proved the truth of his assertions with regard to the influence which those three elements exercise on the constitution and temperament. I perceived that a portion of the physical and moral habits of the people whom I studied, were indicated by the state of their soil, whether arid or marshy, level or mountainous, barren or fertile, and by the quantity and quality of their aliments. I conceived that all those circumstances entered as so many data into the solution of my problem, and from that time I have constantly had in view the consideration of the following question—"What influence over the manners and the character of a people may be ascribed to the physical state of their soil, considered under all the circumstances of heat

and

and cold, dryness and humidity, lowness and elevation, fertility and barrenness, joined to the quality of its productions?"

If this be the sense in which Montesquieu understood the word climate, he should have said so, and then there would have been no dispute on the subject. Every day new facts accumulate, which demonstrate that the above circumstances powerfully and variously modify the physical and moral constitution of nations, and produce contrasts in neighbouring, and resemblances in distant countries—that a people who migrate preserve for a long time habits which are discordant with their new residence, because those habits proceed from an obstinate mechanism of organization—that, finally, even in the same country, and under the same climate, the disposition and temperament of the inhabitants vary according to their customs, exercises, regimen, and aliments. The knowledge of those physical laws form, therefore, a necessary element in

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the science of governing and of organizing a social body in conformity with the movement of nature. Political legislation, properly understood, is only the application of the laws of nature. Factitious and conventional laws ought, therefore, to be only the expression of physical and natural laws, and not the expression of the capricious will of an individual, a party, or even a nation—a will which, though pronounced by the great majority of all mankind, might still be erroneous: but as in researches of this kind, and in a science which is yet in its infancy, it is of importance to admit nothing that partakes of the spirit of system, I shall state the mode of proceeding which appears to me the best calculated to lead to truth.

Having fixed upon a particular people and country, it is necessary in the first place to describe the climate; and by climate I mean the general state of the weather, the latitude, and the temperature during the different seasons—the annual

nual system of the winds, and the dry or humid, cold or hot qualities that distinguish them, according to the different points from which they blow, with their duration and periodical returns—the quantity of water that falls yearly—the storms, the mists, and the hurricanes. Passing next to the physical constitution of the soil, it is necessary to point out the aspect and configuration of the ground, as to plains and mountains—to indicate where the country is woody and where it is open—in what places the soil is arid and in what aqueous, and whether the waters consist of marshes, rivers, or lakes—to determine the general elevation, and partial risings above the level of the sea, as well as the declivities of large masses of earth towards different points of the horizon—to examine the nature of the different beds and strata which compose the soil, distinguishing its qualities, whether argillaceous, calcareous, sandy, rocky, loamy, or vegetable; its banks of schistus, its granites, marbles, mines, vol-

canoes,

canoes, salts, and metallic springs. Then ought to be described its vegetable and animal productions, such as the trees, plants, grains, and fruits of every kind—its birds, quadrupeds, fishes, and reptiles. In a word, nothing that belongs to the physical state of the country ought to be omitted.

This ground work once laid, the next object of consideration is the human species. A view ought first to be taken of the general temperament of the inhabitants; next their local modifications, the kind and quantity of their aliments, and the most striking of their moral and physical qualities: then, embracing the mass of population in a political point of view, we should consider it as distributed into inhabitants of the country and of the towns; and into labourers, artizans, merchants, soldiers, and agents of the government. Finally, we should proceed to the developement of the general system of the government, the nature of its power,

and

and the mode of exercising it in the different branches of the formation and execution of laws, administration of police and of justice, public instruction, revenue and expenditure, foreign relations, military and naval forces, balance of commerce, and every part of political economy.

From such a picture of well ascertained facts there would, in the first place, result all the data necessary for acquiring an accurate knowledge of the moral and political constitution of a nation; while the action and reaction of the several parts on each other would present an interesting subject for reflection, and exhibit combinations highly useful in the profound theory of legislation and government.

Pictures of this kind would be peculiarly instructive, were they the representations of the state of different and dissimilar nations. The contrast in the results would serve the better to explain the

power

power of physical facts operating as causes. There would then remain only one operation, that of comparing the pictures the same people present at different periods, which would exhibit the successive action and genealogical order the moral and physical facts have followed, and enable us to deduce therefrom laws of combination and rules of rational probability. Indeed, when we study the ancient and modern histories we now possess, we readily perceive in the progress, or, if I may so call it, the life of political bodies, a mechanism which indicates the existence of more general and uniform laws than common observation has been able to discover. This remark is not suggested by the comparison so often made of the duration of political societies to the lives of individuals, according to which all the phases of youth, maturity, and old age, are to be found in the rise, splendor, and decay of empires. This comparison, which is in every respect vicious, has a very pernicious tendency, since it induces us to consider

consider the dissolution of political bodies as an unavoidable necessity, whatever may be the nature of their organization. That dissolution, however, is only the effect of a radical error in the system of legislation, which has hitherto been only directed to one of these objects, to *create*, to *maintain*, or to *overthrow*; that is to say, it has only embraced one of the three periods of which the existence of every thing is composed. To determine the concomitant phenomena of each of those three periods, in order to form a general theory, embracing all the cases of a political body in its different phases of vigour or plenitude, of weakness or vacuity, and describing the different kinds of regimen suitable to an overflow or deficiency of population, would be a science equally new and important.—Such ought to be the object of history: but it must be confessed that this object cannot be well accomplished, except with respect to existing nations and in modern times, which afford the means of collecting all analo-

gous facts. I have therefore more than once thought that travels, undertaken for this object, would be the means of procuring excellent materials for history; and not modern history only, but also that of ancient times. They would serve to collect and ascertain a multitude of scattered facts, which are so many living monuments of antiquity. These monuments too are much more numerous than is generally imagined. Besides the ruins, inscriptions, medals, and even manuscripts which are frequently discovered, we have it still in our power to examine customs, manners, religions, and particularly *language*, the construction of which *is a complete history of every people*, and its associations and analogies, the clue of Ariadne in the dark labyrinth of the origin of nations.

Men have been too eager in the compilation of universal histories. Before such vast edifices were erected, it would have been proper to have prepared all the details,

and

and to have elucidated the different parts of which they were to be composed. There should have been procured a good complete history of each nation, or at least all the fragments we possess should have been collected and put in order, that rational conclusions might have been drawn.

We have paid too much deference to the Greeks and Romans: we have servilely followed a narrow and exclusive method, which refers every thing to the system of an insignificant people of Asia unknown in antiquity, or to the system of Herodotus, the circumscribed limits of which exhibit only Egypt, Greece, and Italy, as if that small space contained the universe, or as if the history of those nations were any thing more than a small and solitary branch of the history of mankind.

It is within a hundred years only that we have ventured to step out of this path, and the horizon is already so much en-

larged, that the most distant boundary of our classical histories presents only the last term of a career of anterior time, in which Thebes, which preceded all the kingdoms of Egypt, had flourished and fallen—in which Asia had witnessed the dissolution of Bactria, Tibet, and several Indian states then renowned for their antiquity—in which hordes of Scythians had migrated from the sources of the Ganges and the Sampou to Great Britain and Denmark—in which the religious systems of Brahmism, Lamism, and Buddism, which is still more ancient, prevailed—in a word, in which there had occurred all the various events of a period which exhibits the ancient Continent, from the extremity of Spain to the confines of Tartary, covered with one forest, and peopled with the same species of wandering savage tribes, under the different names of Celtes, Germans, Cimbri, Scythians, and Massagetes. After following the English writers in those profound researches, which have made us acquainted with the sacred books

of the Indians, the Vedams, the Pourans, and the Chastrans—after studying the antiquities of Tibet and Tartary with Georgi, Pallas, and Strahlemberg, and those of Germany and Scandinavia with Hornius, Elichanan, Iablonsky, Marcow, Gebhard, and Ihre, it will be acknowledged that we are now only opening the mine of ancient history, and that in less than a century all our Græco-Roman compilations, all the pretended Universal Histories of Rollin, Bossuet, Fleury, &c. are books which must be re-cast. Even the reflections of those works will be found of no value, since the facts on which they are founded are either totally false or mis-stated. Foreseeing this revolution, which already begins to be felt, I have sometimes reflected on the means best calculated to direct its operation. I shall disclose my ideas on this subject with confidence, because a truer picture of antiquity would have the moral utility of removing a multiplicity of prejudices, the *source of which is only considered sacred because it is unknown*;

and likewise the political utility of contributing to make the people of every country regard each other as brothers, by producing titles of genealogy which prove the epochs and the degree of their consanguinity.

It is obvious that a work of this kind cannot be executed by one individual, and that it requires the united exertions of a number of fellow-labourers. There is wanting a numerous society, which, divided into sections, would methodically follow every branch of one identical plan of research. I see the elements of this society in the different academies of Europe, which, whether by their influence as public bodies, or by the emulation they have created, have been, whatever may be advanced to the contrary, the principal causes of the progress of instruction and science. Each of those academies, acting as a section of the great historico-philosophic society, might direct its inquiries to the history and the monuments of its own

country,

country, in the same manner as the learned men of Petersburgh have done with respect to Russia and Tartary; the English Society of Calcutta for India, China, and Tibet; and the Society of learned Germans for ancient Germania and Sarmatia. To those recent labours we are already indebted for works which, in descending to posterity, will do honour to the individuals who executed them, and the governments which favoured and encouraged them.

In the plan which I have conceived, the researches would be allotted to seven principal sections. The first, under the name of the Celtic, would have for the subject of its investigation all the languages and all the nations which, with characters of affinity rendered daily more apparent, appear to have been spread over Gaul, Great Britain, Italy, and all Germany, as far as the Deserts of Cimbrica and Sarmatia. To this branch should be attached the study of the Erse, the Welch, and the

language of Brittany; the ancient German, which is still preserved in the modern German; and the Dutch and the English, which proceed from the Gothic, the dialects of which extended from Scandinavia to Thrace and the Grecian continent.

The Literati of Sweden and Germany have, within these thirty years, proved, that the Aborigines of Europe and of Greece consisted of one race of savages, devoted to a pastoral, hunting, or wandering life, and speaking a language radically the same. It becomes daily more and more evident, that the Gauls or Celtæ (Keltæ) spoke originally one language, which in Germany was called the Teutonic, in the more northern parts of Europe the Gothic, in Thrace the Scythic, and in Greece and Italy the Pelasgic. Those famous Pelasgi, from whom the Greeks and Romans sprung, were real Scythians, and the ancestors of the Thracians, who, as Herodotus insinuates, pre-

served the Scythian idiom, and were consequently a *Getic*, or *Gothic* race; for, by the names Getæ, Gotthi, and Scythæ, the Ancients meant the same kind of people. This identity, it is true, is not apparent to us in the word *Seydh*; but it was sufficiently obvious to those who pronounced it *s-kouth*, a word composed of the article *s*, which in the Gothic is equivalent to our article *the*, and *kouth*, that is to say, *Goth* or *Gaeth*, which, in a number of ancient and modern dialects, signifies a warrior or man of courage*, and by transition, a wealthy, generous, or good man†. The warrior, who was brave and powerful, would naturally be styled rich, generous, and good, in contradistinction to the evils which attended a state of poverty and weakness. The

* The *gou* of the Orientals, in which the sound of the *g* resembles the pronunciation of our *r*, as a guttural.

† The similarity between the words *good* in English, *gut* in German, and *gouth*, is worthy of remark.

The mœsogothic glossary of Doctor Ihre, published at Upsal in 1769, contains interesting details on this subject, to which the remarks of Gaterer and Schœzer have added some additional information. They have proved, that the Greek has a striking affinity to the ancient Gothic, both with respect to the words and the syntax. Thus the enthusiastic admirers of the Greeks are exposed to the alternative of paying a part of their devotion to the Thracians and Scythians, or of withdrawing it from their favourites, upon discovering them to be the brethren of the Vandals and Ostrogoths.

This consanguinity forms a point of contact, whence a second division arises. This division, which I call the *Hellenistic* Section, embraces the Greek and Latin languages, which have for descending branches all the idioms of the south of Modern Europe, the Portugueze, Spanish, French, and Italian, and all the terms of science

science used by the nations in the north of Europe, among whom, as well as the people of the south, those two languages are intermixed with the ancient Gothic. Their ascending branches are a mixture of the Pelasgic idiom, with the Phœnician, Egyptian, Lydian and Ionic words introduced by the Asiatic colonies, the first settlements of which have given rise to the fabulous stories of Danaus and Cadmus. It appears that the people of those colonies were to Greece and Italy, what the European emigrants have been to Asia and America; that they carried with them the arts and sciences of polished Asia, and became a stock of population which sometimes identified itself with the original inhabitants, and sometimes extirpated or absorbed them. Their migration may be traced by the alphabet. During the Trojan war, the number of the Greek letters was increased by three or four Lydian or Trojan characters, one of which is still to be found in the Armenian alphabet.

The information necessary to elucidate the labours of this section should be derived from a third, which, under the name of the Phœnician, ought to embrace the study of the following idioms—The ancient Hebrew, or the Samaritan; the Hebrew of the second age, or the Chaldean; the Hebrew of the third age, or the Syriac; the more modern dialects of the Coptic and Egyptian, which are a mixture of the Greek with the old Egyptian; the Arabic and Ethiopic, which differ only in the character. To this section it would belong to make researches respecting Carthage, and its colonies in Spain, Sicily and Africa. Recent researches have discovered some remarkable traces of those settlements in the kingdoms of Fez and Morocco. It would inform us to what branch we should refer the singular idiom of the Biscayens, which appears to have been at one time spoken over all Spain, and which has no analogy with the Celtic. It would explain to us the origin of the language of the inhabitants of Mount Atlas, called

Berberes; a language which resembles none with which we are at present acquainted: but I may here remark, that ancient dialects have in general been best preserved in mountainous countries. I have in my possession a Berbere Vocabulary, but I have not yet had time to examine it sufficiently: I have merely observed a frequent use of the guttural *r*, which is the *Gamma* of the Greeks, the *Gain* of the Arabs, and which is found throughout all the south of Asia. I imagine that this dialect is the ancient Numidian. This section would also, by the means of the Arabic, come in contact with several dialects of India and Africa, and with the Persian and modern Turkish, the basis of which is to be found in the Tartar and ancient Scythian languages.

On this basis there should be formed a fourth section, destined to examine the numerous dialects which have branches of analogy from China to England. It might, perhaps, be able to explain to us how

how it happens that the Anglo-Saxon has the same syntax as the modern Persian, which is founded on the language of the ancient Parthians, who were a Scythian people; and that a number of words in the most common use are alike in both idioms. It would explain to us why, in Sweden and Denmark, there is a vast number of geographical names which are also found among the Moguls, and throughout India—why the Tartar of the Crimea, quoted by Busbeck ambassador from the Emperor to Soliman II. resembles the Mæsogothic of Ulphilas; that is to say, why a dialect of the Mogul tribes of Tchinguizkan is similar to a dialect of the ancient Scythian or Gothic, of which I have already spoken.

For this section there would be reserved the solution of many interesting problems, upon the first data of which we have hitherto only touched. In considering those analogies of different languages; in collecting the similitudes which exist in the usages,

usages, the customs, the manners, the rites, and even in the physical constitution of nations; in considering that the Cimbri, the Teutones, the Germans, the Saxons, the Danes and the Swedes are all distinguished by the same characters of physiognomy as that race formerly called Massagetes or Great Getes, and in modern times Elutes and Mangols, that is to say, white men from the west;—in considering that the people of those countries are high in stature, and have white skins, blue eyes, and fair hair—we are convinced that the first cause of this similarity of constitution, is a similarity of climate, food, and mode of life: but we must also admit that the other analogies are the consequences of migrations operated by those wars and conquests so rapidly and easily made among pastoral nations. It would be of importance to know the details of those migrations and conquests, and to learn at what period that terrible and powerful horde of Azes spread themselves to the extremities of the north, whither they bore

the

the name of the frightful religion of Woden; systematic ideas would, perhaps, induce us to fix this epoch at the time when Mithridates, flying from Pompey, drove before him the people who inhabited the banks of the Euxine sea, who in their turn pushed forward the Sarmatians: but we have solid reasons for placing it at an earlier date, and particularly for refusing to acknowledge the existence of Odin, or Wodin, as the leader of that invasion. This pretended chieftan is the divinity worshipped in other countries under the different names of Budd, Bedda, Butta, Eot, and Taut, that is, Mercury; which is evident from the name Mercury being given in the south to the same day of the week that in some parts of the north of Europe is called *Wensdag*, *Wodendag*, and *Wednesday*, that is, *Woden's day*; and which on the one part connects this system with that of the Druids, who were the worshippers of Teutates, and on the other part with that of the Ghetes, who were the adorers of Zalmoxis, now the Lama of

Tibet

Tibet and Tartary. When we consider that Tibet Bud-Tan (the land of Bud(a)) is the ancient country of the Brahmans—that, in the time of Alexander, those Brahmans or Gymnosophists were the most learned and most venerated cast in India—that the most ancient pilgrimage of Asia was directed to *Lah-sa* and *Poutala*—that the Scythian or Gnetic hordes have flocked thither from time immemorial—that their posterity, now called Tartars, still preserve their dogmas and rites—and that this worship has sometimes occasioned schismatic wars among themselves, sometimes armed them against foreign unbelievers: when we consider all those things, it appears probable that some hordes who had emigrated from the deserts of Chamo and Buckaria, have been gradually driven to the Cimbric Chersonesus, by an impulse similar to that which conducted the present Turks from the mountains of Altai, and the sources of the Irtich, to the banks of the Bosphorus. If this conjecture be well founded, the Swedish Chronicle,

quoted

quoted in the History of Tchinguizkan, may have been correct in stating that the Swedes came from Kasgar.

It will be obvious, that the study of the ancient languages of Persia, Zend and Pehleve, and perhaps the Median, should likewise be allotted to this section: but it will require farther labours to determine whether the Sclavonic, spoken in Bohemia, Poland, and Russia, has really been transported from Mount Caucasus and the country of Mosques; as the Asiatic manners of the nations that speak it would induce us to believe. To future labours it will also belong to distinguish the Mongol from those of the Calmuc and Hunnic branches, dialects of which are spoken in Finland, Lapland and Hungary; to determine whether the ancient language of India, the Sanscrit, is not the primitive dialect of Tibet and Indostan, and the origin of a multitude of dialects of Asia; to discover what language is connected with the Chinese and Malay idioms, which are spread

spread over all the isles of India and the Pacific Ocean. Such ought to be the labours of the two other sections, namely the fifth and sixth, while the last should be devoted to the comparison of the languages of the east of Asia with those of the west of America, in order to prove the communication of the inhabitants of those continents.

The most useful works that could result from these labours would be the formation of dictionaries and grammars. Indeed it might almost be asserted, that each language is a complete history, since it is a picture of all the ideas of a people. I am therefore persuaded that the study of language is that which will enable us to ascend farthest in the genealogy of nations: by successively deducting what each nation has borrowed or supplied, we should at last be conducted to one or several primitive and original languages, the analysis of which would even elucidate the wonderful invention of speech. No

historical

historical researches can be more useful than those which tend to accumulate vocabularies and grammars; and in that operation the universal alphabet, of which I have formed a plan, would be of real advantage, as, by reconciling all languages to one character, it would greatly abridge their study, and exhibit at one view the resemblance or the difference of the words of which they are composed.

It now remains for me to consider the influence which historical works have on the opinions of succeeding generations, and on the conduct of nations and governments. A few examples will serve to illustrate the nature and power of this influence. Every one knows the effect produced on the mind of Alexander by the Iliad, which is a history in verse. The son of Philip becoming the enthusiastic admirer of the valour of Achilles, made it his model, and, carrying the historical poem in a golden box, nourished by its perusal his military passion. In tracing

tracing effects to their causes, it is not absurd to suppose that the conquest of Asia depended on this simple occurrence of the reading of Homer by Alexander: the conjecture at least is probable. But another fact, which is not less memorable, and more certain, is, that the History of Alexander, written by Quintus Curtius, was the principal cause of the terrible wars which agitated all the north of Europe at the end of the last and the commencement of the present century. All of you have read the History of Charles XII. King of Sweden, and you all know that it was the work of Quintus Curtius that inflamed him with the desire of imitating Alexander. The effects of this passion, which first shook, and finally consolidated the Russian Empire, may be said to have transplanted it from Asia to Europe; for, had it not been on account of the war with Sweden, Peter I. would probably have remained at Moscow, and never have thought of founding Petersburgh: but had the historian and the poet accompanied their

their narrations with judicious reflections on the misery which conquests produce, and, instead of profaning the name of virtue by applying it to military affairs, pointed out the extravagance and criminality of war, it is probable that the minds of the two young princes, of whom we have spoken, would have received another direction, and that their activity would have been employed in the acquisition of solid glory, of which the Czar Peter, notwithstanding the defects of his education, had formed by far the most just and noble idea.

I have cited individual examples; I shall now notice popular and national instances of this influence. Whoever has read with attention the History of the Eastern and Western Empires, and that of Modern Europe, must have observed, that in all the convulsions of nations, in all the wars, in all the treaties of peace and alliance that have taken place within fifteen centuries, there has invariably been a reference

a reference to transactions recorded in the books of the Hebrews. If Popes pretend to anoint and consecrate Kings, it is in imitation of Melchisedeck and Samuel. If Emperors do penance for their sins at the feet of Pontiffs, it is in imitation of David and Hezekiah. It is in imitation of the Jews, that Europeans make war upon Infidels. It is in imitation of Ahod, Eglon, and Judith, that individuals assassinate princes to obtain the palm of martyrdom. In the fifteenth century, when the art of printing promulgated those works which before existed only in manuscript, and rendered them books of general use, this influence was double, and produced an epidemic mania of imitation. You know the dreadful effects to which this passion gave rise in the wars promoted by Luther in Germany, in those which Cromwell conducted in England, and in those of the league which was terminated by Henry IV. Even in our own times, we have seen a striking example of the power of those

those effects exhibited in the war of the Americans against Great Britain. The passages of the Bible in which Moses and Samuel expose the abuses of royalty, served not a little to support the insurrection, as they had formerly assisted in overthrowing the throne of Charles. Thus the principal mover of the destiny of the universe, the *Normal* rule of an immensity of generations, has been drawn from the history of a petty nation, almost unknown to antiquity, and whose twelve tribes, consisting of a mixture of Arabs and Phœnicians, inhabited only 275 square leagues. Even Solomon, in the height of his glory, never possessed more than 400 leagues of territory, one half of which was desert; and never governed more than 800,000 people, and consequently commanded only 200,000 soldiers. Suppose those books had never been known, then the system of Mahomet, which is an imitation of that of Moses, would never have existed. The movement of the Roman world for those

two

two centuries past, would have had a different direction. Suppose likewise that the first Presses had given birth only to good moral and political works, the spirit of nations and of governments would have received another impulsion.

At last true philosophy, philosophy which is the friend of peace and of universal tolerance, had extinguished the ferment, and the eighteenth century seemed to approach the finest epoch of humanity; when a new tempest, hurrying men's minds in an opposite extreme, has overthrown the rising edifice of Reason, and has furnished us with a new example of the influence of History, and of the abuse of its comparisons. You must be aware that I allude to that mania of citations and imitations of the Greek and Roman history, which within a few years has struck us as it were with a vertigo *. Names, surnames, dress, manners, laws, seem all about to become Spartan or Roman.

* See the History of the Year 1793.

man. Ancient prejudices alarmed, and recent passions irritated, have pretended to discover the cause of this phenomenon in a *philosophic spirit*, of which they are ignorant; but that philosophic spirit, which is merely *observation disengaged from passion and prejudice*, easily recognizes its real origin in the system of education which has prevailed for a century and a half in Europe. The classical books so extravagantly admired, the works of the celebrated poets, orators, and historians of Greece and Rome, placed without consideration in the hands of youth, have inspired them with their principles and their sentiments. Those books, extolling certain men and certain actions as models of greatness or perfection, inflame the mind of the student with the natural desire of imitation. Habituated under the collegiate lash to admire certain beauties real or supposed, but which in either case are equally above his comprehension, he becomes inspired with the blind passion of enthusiasm. We have seen

seen this enthusiasm, at the commencement of the present age, manifest itself in a ridiculous admiration of the literature and arts of the Ancients. Other circumstances have now turned this admiration towards politics, in which it displays a vehemence proportioned to the interests that are brought into action. Varied in its form, in its name, and in its object, it is still the same passion; so that we have done nothing more than to change idols, and substitute a new worship for that of our ancestors. We reproach them for their superstitious adoration of the Jews, and we are guilty of an adoration no less superstitious of the Greeks and Romans. Our ancestors swore by Jerusalem and the Bible; and the new sect swear by Sparta, Athens, and Titus Livy.

It is not a little remarkable that the apostles of this new religion are far from having a just idea of the doctrine they inculcate, and the models they propose to us are quite inconsistent with the object

they wish to promote. They boast to us of the liberty and spirit of equality which prevailed in Rome and Greece; but they forget that at Sparta an aristocracy of *thirty thousand nobles* held *two hundred thousand serfs* under a yoke of the most cruel oppression; that of four millions of persons, which was all the population of ancient Greece *, more than three millions were slaves; that civil and political inequality was the dogma of the people and their legislators; that this principle was consecrated by Lycurgus and Solon, professed by Aristotle and the *divine* Plato, and propagated by the generals and the ambas-

* The whole of the country known under the name of Greece, consisted of about 3850 square leagues; 1100 of this number were included in Macedonia, which, according to Strabo, contained, in the time of Alexander, that is to say, at the period of its greatest prosperity, 1,000,000 of persons. This is somewhat less than 1000 to the square league, and is the proportion of those countries which are considered the most populous. I apply it to the whole of Greece, in order that I may have no dispute on the subject with the admirers of an-

ambassadors of Athens, Sparta and Rome, who speak in Polybius, Livy, and Thucydides, like the ambassadors of Attila and of Tchinguizkan. They have forgotten that the same manners and the same government prevailed in what is called the most glorious days of the republic; that this pretended republic, varying according to its epochs, was always an oligarchy, consisting of a noble and sacerdotal order possessing almost exclusively the land and public employments, and a plebeian mass oppressed with usurers, having only four acres of ground a-head, and differing from their slaves only by the right of flogging

tiquity. It is, besides, the most favourable proportion for modern Greece. According to the calculations made with much industry and knowledge by Felix the Consul of Salonica, Macedonia at present contains only 700,000 persons, which is a decrease of three-tenths. The Morea contains only 300,000 in 700 square leagues, Attica 20,000, and all modern Greece united not 2,000,000, or 500 persons to the square league;—a proportion somewhat greater than that of Spain.

ing them, growing old, or dying in the gardens of their centurions, in the slavery of camps, and in the midst of military rapine; that in those states, pretended to be founded on liberty and equality, all political rights were concentrated in the hands of the indolent and factious inhabitants of the capitals, who viewed their allies and associates only in the light of tributaries.

The more I have studied the celebrated constitutions of antiquity, the more have I been convinced that the governments of the Mamlouks of Egypt and the Deys of Algiers do not differ essentially from those of Sparta and of Rome; and that the Greeks and Romans, we so much venerate, want only the names of Huns and Vandals to excite in us the ideas we have been taught to form of those nations. Eternal wars, the murder of prisoners, massacres of women and children, breach of faith, internal factions, domestic tyranny and foreign oppression are the most striking features of the picture of Greece and Italy during

during five hundred years, as it has been pourtrayed to us by Thucydides, Polybius, and Titus Livy. The war against Xerxes, the only just and honourable one in which the Greeks were ever engaged, was scarcely finished when the insolent vexations of Athens on the sea commenced; next comes the horrible Peloponnesian war; then the Theban; to these succeed the wars of Alexander and his successors; then follow those of the Romans, without affording the mind the satisfaction of repose over half a generation of peace.

The legislation of the Ancients has been highly praised:—but what was its object, what its effects? It was calculated to form men for acts of savage barbarity, as ferocious animals are trained to fight lions and bulls. Their constitutions are admired:—but what was the constitution of Sparta? Cast in a mould of brass, it condemned a nation of thirty thousand people, never to increase in population or territory; a regulation worthy of the Monks of La Trappe.

Trappe. Greek and Roman models are proposed to us :—but what analogy exists between a country like France, consisting of 27,000 square leagues, and containing 25,000,000 of people, and Greece? The Peloponnesus contained six federal independent states within 700 square leagues of territory. Lacedæmon, which, according to Thucydides, formed two-fifths of the Peloponnesus, consisted only of 280 leagues. Attica, including the 20 leagues of Megaris, consisted only of 165 leagues. The whole Grecian continent, including Macedonia, did not extend beyond 3850 square leagues, that is to say, one-sixth of France, consisting of a territory which is not generally fertile. What comparison can there be formed between the manners and habits of the inhabitants of a number of small and semi-barbarous states *, poor

* Now that I have seen the savages of America, I am more convinced of the propriety of this comparison. The first book of Thucydides, and all his descriptions of the manners of the Lacedæmonians, is so well suited to the *Five Nations*, that I would willingly call the Spartans the *Iroquóis* of the old world.

and piratical, divided, and enemies by birth and by prejudice—and one great consolidated nation which is the first in history to exhibit a population of 25,000,000, speaking the same language, following the same customs, and whose various convulsions, during fifteen centuries, have only served to produce more conformity of manners, and more unity of government?

The modern Lycurguses have spoken to us only of bread and of iron. The iron of pikes produces nothing but blood, and bread is only produced by the iron of ploughs.—The poets step forward to celebrate what they denominate warlike virtues. Let us reply to the poets by the howlings of the wolves, and screams of the vultures, that gather the dreadful harvest of battles; or by the lamentations of widows and orphans, expiring with hunger on the tombs of their husbands and fathers.--Writers have endeavoured to dazzle us with the glories of war: *But unfortunate are the people who shine with greatest splendour*

splendour in the pages of history! Like the heroes of the drama, their celebrity is acquired at the expence of their happiness.

The friends of the arts have been seduced by the magnificence of some ancient works; but they forget that the temples and other great edifices of Athens were the first cause of its ruin, and the first symptom of its decay: being the fruits of a system of extortion, they at once provoked the resentment and the defection of its allies, the jealousy and cupidity of its enemies; besides, those masses of stone, however elegantly constructed, are a barren employment of labour, and a ruinous absorption of wealth. The palaces of the Louvre, Versailles, and the multitude of other vast buildings with which France is overloaded*, have contributed to increase

* When I consider that the Church of St. Genevieve, now the Pantheon, has cost more than thirty millions; that St. Sulpice, and twenty other churches of Paris, have cost from five to ten millions; that there is not a town in France containing ten thousand inhabitants, which

crease our taxes, and to produce disorder in our finances. Had Louis XIV. expended on highways and canals the 4,600,000,000 livres which his palace, already in decay, cost †, France would neither have known the bankruptcy of Law, nor its ruinous consequences now reproduced among us.

Let us cease, then, to admire those Ancients whose constitutions were oligarchies, whose policy consisted in the exclusive privileges

has not laid out a million, and not a parish which has not laid out sixty or eighty thousand francs in the construction of a church, I am inclined to believe that France has wasted ten millions in piling up those useless mounts of stone. This sum, however, is equal to the amount of four years of our present revenue, and double that at the time of the building. Such is the wisdom of nations and governments!

† There existed in the house of the old intendant of of buildings (d'Angiviller) a manuscript volume superbly bound, containing a register of the expences attending the building of Versailles, the recapitulation of which, in the last page, amounted to 1,400,000,000 l.; but silver was then at 16 francs the marc, and now it is 52 francs.

privileges of cities, and whose morality was founded on the law of force, and the hatred of all foreign nations. Let us no longer ascribe to a ferocious and superstitious antiquity, a science of government with which it was not acquainted; for in modern Europe have arisen the grand and ingenious principles of the representative system, of the division and equilibrium of powers, and those profound analyses of the social state, which, by an evident and simple series of facts, demonstrate that there are no riches but in the productions of the earth, which feed, clothe, and shelter man—that those fruits are only to be obtained by labour—that labour being painful, it can only be stimulated among a free people by the attraction of enjoyments, that is to say, by the security of property—and that the maintenance of that security requires the public force called *government*. Government may therefore be defined an *insurance bank*, in the preservation of which each individual is interested in proportion

to the stake he has to risk, but which those who have none may naturally enough wish to destroy.

Having emancipated ourselves from the Jewish fanaticism, let us now repress that Vandal or Roman fanaticism, which, under political denominations, would lead us back to all the fury of religious contests. Let us repress that savage doctrine which would give to polished Europe the manners of barbarous hordes—which would make war a means of existence, though all history proves that war conducts every people, whether conquering or conquered, to the same inevitable ruin; since the neglect of agriculture and manufactures, which foreign wars occasion, produces scarcity, popular tumults, civil wars, and, finally, military despotism. Let us also disclaim that doctrine which elevates Assassination to the rank of Virtue, in opposition to the testimony of all History, which demonstrates, that assassinations have ever been the preludes to the greatest disasters;

for, wherever daggers are displayed, the law is eclipsed. In our own times, the assassination of the vilest apostle* of that horrid system has only served to mislead the public opinion, and to bring about the destruction of 100,000 of our best citizens. We may kill men; but we cannot kill things, nor the circumstances which produce them. Brutus and Casca stabbed Cæsar, and the Roman tyranny was consolidated: why? because from the time of

* By the hand of Charlotte Corday. Among the Jews, however, the assassination of tyrants was inculcated and protected: among Christians it has been taught and recommended by St. Thomas Aquinas, and by the Jesuits, who practised their doctrine on Princes who were not tyrants. Two Emperors, who are now alarmed at this doctrine since it has got into other hands, wish to re-establish the order of the Jesuits. Were they to succeed, they would one day find more difficulty in getting rid of those *worthy fathers* than the kings of France, Spain, and Portugal formerly experienced; for they would not be assisted by Voltaires, Helvetiuses, D'Alemberts and other antifanatical philosophers, who are now abhorred by some sovereigns, though Frederick II. was of their number.

of the Tribunes there was no longer an equilibrium of powers; because the caprice of the Roman people became the law of the state; because, after the taking of Corinth and Carthage, that poor indolent and depraved people were bought and sold by their rapacious Generals, Pro-consuls, and Quæstors, after they had gorged themselves with the wealth of the provinces they governed.

Brutus and Casca seem destined to obtain the same influence in this age, that Ahod and the Maccabees possessed in the last. Thus, under different names, the same fanatics continue to devour nations. The actors change on the scene, the passions never change, and all history exhibits only the rotation of a circle of calamities and errors; but at the same time all history proclaims that the first and general cause of those errors and calamities is *human ignorance*, which neither understands its true interests, nor even the means of attaining the object of its passions. It is not then motives of discouragement, nor misanthropic

misanthropic and antisocial declamations, that ought to result from our reflections, but urgent counsels of moral and political instruction addressed to nations and governments. Indeed it is particularly in this respect that the study of history assumes its noblest character of utility. Exhibiting a great number of facts and experiments on the developement of the faculties and passions of man in the social state, it furnishes the philosopher with principles of legislation more general and conformable to every hypothesis; bases of constitutions more simple and agreeable to the nature of man; theories of government more appropriate to climates and habits; practices of administration more profound and more consistent with experience; in a word, more efficacious and more paternal means of perfecting future generations, by commencing with ameliorating the condition of the present.

Hitherto I have sketched rather than completed my observations on history. It is proper that I should now apply the principles

ciples I have laid down to the most eminent of ancient and modern works, and that I should put in practice the rules of criticism which I have proposed to you: but the excessive and rapid labour in which I have been engaged for two months, renders it necessary that I should pause before I proceed to this second part of my subject. I have performed one act of devotion to the public*, by furnishing the first part, after a preparation of only fifteen days. Deprived of my manuscripts, it now becomes indispensable that I should suspend these Lectures, and employ some time in collecting new materials.

N. B. The Normal School being soon after given up, the Author had no longer any motive for continuing his labour.

* The Author, after ten months imprisonment, (to Fructidor 6, of the year 2,) was exiled from Paris by a decree of the Convention, when he received at Nice, in the month of Frumaire, his unexpected appointment to a Professor's place, and the invitation of the Committee of Public Instruction to return immediately and fulfil the duties of that situation.

NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE preceding pages contain the whole of the Lectures on History, published by Citizen Volney in the beginning of the present year at Paris, with the exception of some observations on the construction of rooms for the accommodation of legislative bodies, or any of those great assemblies in which public speaking is practised. In a long note, accompanied by a Plan, the Author has proposed a variety of improvements in the architecture of buildings of this kind; but as his remarks relative to that object are not connected with the subject of his Lectures, and as the engraving of the Plan would have added considerably to the expence, and very little to the value of the book, it has been judged proper to omit both in the translation. In other respects the text of the Author has been regularly, and, it is hoped, accurately followed.

FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM 27 AU 72

Printed by WILSON & Co. Wild Court, Lincoln's Inn Fields.